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SFX

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NOVEMBER 2010
#201

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THE INSIDE SKINNY

Look at their happy, smiling faces...

NICK SETCHFIELD FEATURES EDITOR

RAVES
- Devoured *Blue Box Boy*, Matthew Waterhouse's frank, mythbusting memoir of his time on '80s *Doctor Who*. Part of me wishes I'd never read it. Part of me wants more, more, more.
- Finally got into *Fringe*. Where have I been? And how do I avoid two-year-old spoilers?
- Look out for a Heroes And Inspirations with Matt Smith in a future issue. Lots of interesting choices...

IAN BERRIMAN REVIEWS EDITOR

RAVES
- After spending two days in Vancouver on the set of the new *Planet Of The Apes* prequel, I'm rewatching the original movies. *Battle For The Planet Of The Apes* is ace!
- Thanks to the four-minute-plus trailer, I'm incredibly excited about *The Walking Dead*.
- They've brought out a Third Doctor-style sonic screwdriver! Want!

RICHARD EDWARDS NEWS EDITOR

RAVES
- Intrigued at the prospect of the new series of *Doctor Who* being split in two. Just how big is the mid-season cliffhanger Steven Moffat's got planned?
- I've had a blast editing our new Joss Whedon special – hope you enjoy it! (*See p102 - Dave B*)

RANTS
- Sad to see that the very promising, Paul Cornell-scripted *Pulse* wasn't picked up by BBC Three.

RUSSELL LEWIN PRODUCTION EDITOR

RAVES
- It was fun slinking back to my old stomping ground of Soho for *SFX*'s 200th birthday party.
- Thanks to blogger Lee Harris's recommendation I read Richard Matheson's *The Incredible Shrinking Man* – smashing book. Top short stories in the same tome, too, including *Duel* and *Button, Button*.
- Caught *Misfits* on Channel 4. Funny how a show about dodgy scrotes managed to be quite likeable.

JORDAN FARLEY EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

RAVES
- Rather enjoying *True Blood*'s increasingly outrageous third season – 13 episodes a year isn't near enough to satisfy my thirst.
- Looking forward to next month's London Expo – particularly going hands on with *Dead Space 2*.

RANTS
- Disappointed to see *Scott Pilgrim* performing so poorly at the box office.

JONATHAN COATES ART ATTACK

RAVES
- I've loved what I've seen of *The Walking Dead* so far – think it'll have me hooked from the start. Can't wait to see how it'll compare to the comic too.
- *Back To The Future* is likely to be the movie that'll convert me to Blu-ray.

RANTS
- Don't understand why Ridley Scott has agreed to revisit the *Alien* universe. Just pointless.

CATHERINE KIRKPATRICK DEPUTY ART ATTACK

RAVES
- Was thoroughly entertained by *Scott Pilgrim Vs The World*, a genuinely cool and quirky film! Also loved the songs Beck penned for the band Sex Bob-Omb.
- Very excited by *The Goonies*' 25th anniversary Blu-ray release. They've only gone and produced a new board game – I'm sold!
- Can't wait for the Halloween special of *Psychoville*, it looks as creepy and twisted as ever.

DAVE GOLDER ONLINE EDITOR

RAVES
- Thanks to doing a feature on the website, I've been re-acquainted with the sheer beauty of the *Earth: Final Conflict* theme tune. So epic, so stirring, so emotive, so in need of a much better show to belong to.

RANTS
- Dear Syfy. Please don't recommission *Haven*. Thank you.

ADRIAN HILL ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER

RAVES
- Not long to go before we get to see *The Walking Dead* – soooooo cant wait for that bad boy to eat into our TV screens! Never read the comic but think the show will be great.

RANTS
- Is it me, or is evening TV going through a dull period right now? Sod the soaps, let's have some real blaster-at-your-side kid action!

MIRIAM McDONALD FEATURED WRITER

Miriam regularly writes reviews for *SFX*

RAVES
- There's a new *Rocketeer* comic mini-series out next year, and I can't wait to see what Cliff Secord does next – whatever he does, it will be in style!
- I'm really looking forward to the film adaptation of JG Ballard's *High Rise*: even if it fails, it should fail in an interesting way, which is more than most films can promise.

STILL ALIVE

Zombies by their very nature are inconsistent, as a great man once said. But I'm dead (hahahaha) excited about *The Walking Dead*. It's so unusual to see a regular horror show lurch onto our small screens. And a show based on a comic too. Madness? Not at all. AMC and FX are seriously investing in this beast – Hollywood heavyweights like Gale Anne Hurd, Frank Darabont and Gregory Nicotero are pulling the strings, and what they've delivered looks trouser-soilingly atmospheric. Start by checking out tinyurl.com/SFXFXUK. After all the vampire romances we've been subjected to, it'll be nice to get our teeth into (hahahaha) some proper, flesh-eating undead on TV.

SFX grabbed the opportunity to hang out with the cast and crew at Comic-Con and quiz them about it (page 56). In the lead role is Brit actor Andrew Lincoln, our cover star this issue – he's a comics fan, it turns out, knowledgeably nattering with us over breakfast about *The Dark Knight Returns* and *From Hell* as well as the Robert Kirkman series his TV show is based on. We'd wish him luck, but with a second season already looking likely, it sounds like he doesn't need it.

DAVE'S RAVES
- Despite being 2D and monochrome, *Limbo* is one of the most disturbing games I've played in a long time. Check it out on Xbox LIVE Arcade.
- The next *Family Guy Star Wars* spoof, *It's A Trap*, will be out in December. I can't wait! The voice cast will mess with my head though: Carrie Fisher is Angela as Mon Mothma. What?!
- If you're coming to London Expo in October, why not wear an *SFX* t-shirt from www.sfxmerch.co.uk?

Meanwhile, we drool over the best of the new and returning US autumn series this month over on page 48. I thought the 2009-2010 season was disappointing in terms of sci-fi TV but the new crop is already shaping up to be better – not to mention other gems that are scheduled for 2011 (check out *Terra Nova* page 12).

I'd like to extend a quick welcome to all those who joined us last month when we celebrated our issue 200 (it seems to have been a great jumping-on point for this sci-fi journey, as we picked up a stack of new subscribers). Whether you're a fresh *SFX*er or someone who's been reading for years, keep giving us feedback – having passed the issue 200 milestone we're planning a little redesign, so let us know what you do or don't like about the mag by email to sfx@futurenet.com.

Be seeing you,

Dave

Dave Bradley
Editor-In-Chief

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www.sfxweekender.com
The awards ceremony will be amazing – have you voted for your sci-fi favourites yet? See page 100, then call 08700 110034 for tickets.

SFX Contents

ISSUE 201 NOVEMBER 2010

"It's still alive!"

NEWS

6 BIG SHOT
Look: it's *Voyage Of The Dawn Treader*!

8 RED ALERT
Breaking news from the SF front line.

24 FREEZE FRAME
Maddest film of next year? It's *Sucker Punch*.

26 DEVELOPMENT HELL
Movies making a bid for freedom.

FEATURES

48 FALL SEASON PREVIEW
Or autumn, as you might know it better: *SFX* picks the best of what American TV will have on offer soon...

56 ON THE COVER
THE WALKING DEAD
...including this little baby, the first prime-time show about zombies.

66 DESPICABLE ME
Supervillains rule in this new animation.

72 JIM LEE
The DC comic book supremo, on drawing the X-Men, Superman and Batman.

76 THE SARAH JANE ADVENTURES
Behind the scenes on series four of the *Who* spin-off, featuring the man himself.

80 FIRST MEN IN THE MOON
The BBC does HG Wells. We investigate.

88 MARK MILLAR
Heroes and Inspirations: The *Kick-Ass* maestro on what drives his ideas.

90 HOAXES
When japes cross into the realm of SF.

RATED

104 CINEMA
Despicable Me or *Piranha 3D*? We can help.

108 DVDS
Prince Of Persia, *Fringe* and a dire *Doctor Who* story.

118 BLU-RAYS
Reborn this month: *Forbidden Planet* and *Mars Attacks*.

120 BOOKS
Iain M Banks gives us some *Surface Detail*.

128 COMICS
Is *The Only Good Dalek...* good?

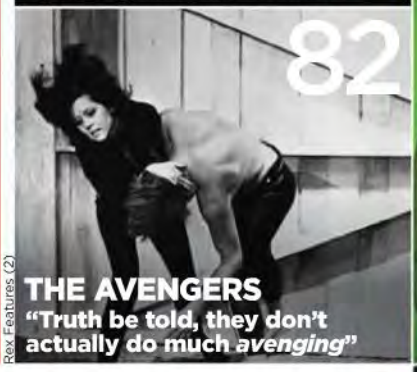
130 VIDEOGAMES
The latest *Halo* game, *Halo: Reach*.

132 MISCELLANEOUS
Listen up! Here are the new *Doctor Who* audio CDs.

134 COLLECTABLES
Where fans of Objets d'Arse should look these days.

48
FALL SEASON PREVIEW
"Luckily we struck a chord with viewers. Now we find out the next part of the story"

96
POLTERGEIST
"*1941* didn't do so good and Spielberg took that to heart"



82
THE AVENGERS
"Truth be told, they don't actually do much *avenging*"

Rex Features (2)

76
SARAH JANE
"You cannot make this a cynical story"

PROFILES

Folk you wouldn't bump into down the pub – unless it was a *really, really* good pub.

64 ANTHONY HEAD
It's that Uther chap from *Merlin*.

70 DAN ABNETT
Revelations from the WH40K author.

86 JASIKA NICOLE
Double fun with *Fringe*'s Agent Astrid.

DESPICABLE ME
"He's a supervillain who's essentially a good guy"
66

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HAVE YOU GOT YOUR TICKETS YET?

Incredibly, VIP passes to ***SFX* Weekender 2** have already sold out, but there are loads of other options available (call 08700 110034 to discuss 'em). Find out more about the live event over on **pages 40 and 41**. We've got George Takei on the guest list and now Terry Pratchett and Robert Rankin! Craig Charles is our Saturday night DJ. It's shaping up nicely...

SFX WEEKENDER 2

5 TOP FACTS WE DISCOVERED THIS MONTH

1 The League of Gentlemen are going to a haunted house for Halloween (p10)
2 William B Davis from *The X-Files* used to get asked to sign cigarettes all the time (p17)
3 The Superman costume Tom Welling wears will be the suit from the new movie (p52)
4 Sarah Wayne Callies had never played a parent before *The Walking Dead* (p62)
5 Russell T Davies watched "The Green Death" before writing his new *SJA* story (p76)

56 THE WALKING DEAD

"I would go through our little zombie phone book and pick 20 zombies for the next day"

RETRO

82 THE AVENGERS 50TH ANNIVERSARY
Not the lot with Iron Man et al, but Steed and his lovely ladies from the swinging '60s.

96 POLTERGEIST
Time Machine: *SFX* finally reveals who directed the Tobe Hooper-Steven Spielberg ghost extravaganza from 1982.

DEPARTMENTS

28 COLUMN DAVID LANGFORD
How original is *Inception*? Let Langford tell you some other sci-fi dreams.

30 YOUR SFX POST APOCALYPSE
Readers' letters galore, rabbiting on about Joss Whedon, *Lost*, Comic-Con, Eliza Dushku and Godzilla in a bow tie.

35 COLUMN JAYNE NELSON
TV channels are dead: discuss. Or let Jayne.

37 COMPETITION
Win a trip to Mars! No, only kidding, but you can win *Buffy* and *Seventh Tower* goodies!

38 YOUR SFX WISHLIST
What friends and fiends should populate the next *Spider-Man* movie. Says you.

42 YOUR SFX EVENT HORIZON
Conventions are all around: here's some we have visited or will be visiting soon.

44 CALENDAR
Your four-week guide to make sure you never miss a single SF thingy, however tiny.

46 SUBSCRIPTIONS
District 9 and *2012* on DVD or Blu-ray can be yours if you follow these instructions!

100 THE SFX AWARDS 2010
Help choose what trophies are handed out live – you might win Weekender tickets!

126 BOOK CLUB
James Blish's *Cities In Flight*.

146 WE❤SF
Our production editor Russell Lewin on why walking home tipsy reminds him of golden horror films.

TV SPOILER THREAT!

We all watch TV shows at different speeds, so *SFX* has a unique system to help you decide whether a news story is safe to read. All TV-related news articles will now come with our unique "Spoiler Threat!" rating:

GREEN: SAFE FOR ALL VIEWERS
A green rating means it's spoiler free for folk watching at the pace of the UK's five analogue TV channels (though if you're waiting for the DVD, we advise caution).

AMBER: SAFE FOR SKY/CABLE VIEWERS
Anything in a story rated amber will not be spoilery to anyone watching at the pace of UK satellite, digital or cable TV.

RED: NOT SAFE FOR ANY UK VIEWERS!
Beware! You might find spoiler information in here about shows that are yet to air in the UK (although they may have been broadcast in the US). You have been warned.

SPOILER ZONE P141

IN-DEPTH *SFX* TV REVIEWS!

We test-drive newbie *The Gates* this month, along with the already up-and-running *Warehouse 13*, *True Blood*, *Haven*, *Eureka* and *Futurama*.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Lucy and Edmund are the only Pevensie siblings to make it to Narnia in the third book (or the fifth, chronologically speaking) as Susan is off globetrotting while Peter is holed up studying for uni. Understandable, then, that many fans have been roaring louder than Aslan about Peter and Susan's fleeting appearances in the trailer, with Susan not only popping up in a reflection as Lucy gazes into the Book Of Shadows but also joining Peter, Edmund and Lucy for a dreamy stroll down the beach. Our best guess is that – much like the White Witch's unscheduled appearance – it's all an elaborate dream sequence.

FIGHT CLUB

Voyage Of The Dawn Treader might be the childhood favourite Narnia tale of most on *SFX*, but it's also potentially the least cinematic, with no epic battles or even a Big Bad. That doesn't mean the Dawn Treader's journey will be plain sailing, though, as this picture amply demonstrates. Our best guess is that the action is taking place on one of the Lone Islands, perhaps just before Lucy, Edmund and Caspian are captured and sold as slaves, as we don't fancy the young Pevensies' chances against this lot. It's possible that they could be looking for clues from those books behind for the location of the Lost Lords, or more likely the whereabouts of Aslan's country. At least they look the part for some good, old-fashioned, swordplay.

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BIG SHOT

Putting you in the picture

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE VOYAGE OF THE DAWN TREADER

When Disney passed on a second *Narnia* sequel blaming *Prince Caspian*'s relatively "poor" performance at the box office it was looking like the Dawn Treader might forever be lost at sea. More fool them because Fox jumped in to save the day, with former Bond (and *7 Up*) director Michael Apted stepping into the shoes of Andrew Adamson to adapt arguably the best book in the series.

As anyone who's read the novel will know (and in spite of what the trailers seem to show) it's only the younger pair of Pevensie siblings – hot-headed Edmund, big-hearted Lucy – and frightful cousin Eustace Scrubb (*Son Of Rambow*'s Will Poulter) who are stepping aboard the journey this time round, reaching Narnia not via wardrobe but magic painting. The wannabe buccaneers have got more important matters than buried gold on their minds though. Along with newly crowned King Caspian X, they're on a mission to find and return the seven banished Lords of Narnia to their rightful place and drop swashbuckling mouse Reepicheep off in Aslan's country at the end of the world. It's like carpooling on the high seas.

The Chronicles Of Narnia: Voyage Of The Dawn Treader ***sails into cinemas on Friday 10 December 2010.***

LAND AND SEA

More than a century may have passed in Narnia between the time the White Witch ruled the country in *The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe* and the Pevensie siblings' battle to reclaim the kingdom in *Prince Caspian*, but the third big-screen adventure finds the newly crowned King Caspian X setting sail for the high seas just three years after his victory over nasty uncle Miraz. As a result not as much has changed in Narnia this time round, though we will be seeing a different side to the world with Caspian and his crew leaving behind those mangy land lubbers in favour of a jaunt on the big blue, only dropping anchor on terra firma to explore the mysterious islands and search for the Lost Lords. Let's hope they don't find Jack Black's Gulliver stuck on one of those islands – we get the feeling one film featuring the giant man-child is going to be more than enough this Christmas.

RED ALERT

THE FUTURE: FIRST
EDITED BY RICHARD EDWARDS

HIGHLIGHTS

Pumpkin Heads
10 *Psychoville* returns with a spooky Halloween special.

Jurassic Lark
12 New Steven Spielberg TV drama *Terra Nova* goes back in time.

Dark City
14 The vampires head to LA in *30 Days Of Night* sequel, *Dark Days*.

Watch The Skies
18 More Spielberg TV with *Falling Skies*, starring angry ETs.

Force Fed
22 It's a *Star Wars* brace, with *Clone Wars* and *Force Unleashed II*.

SFX EXCLUSIVE! Producer interview

To Hell And Back

There are some big changes coming in *Being Human*'s third season, but it's all part of the show's natural evolution, says its new producer

SPOILER THREAT
For threat level explanation turn to page 5.

There's a new broom in charge of *Being Human* in the form of producer Phil Trethowan but, he humbly admits, any sweeping changes in series three have come about more through "natural evolution" than any desire to force through changes.

And there are some big changes in store: a new location, a new house, new characters, new threats, new werewolves.

If he *has* stamped his mark on the show, he argues, it's more on the production side. "In some ways, it's the things that aren't visible – how the production is structured, things like that – but we are shooting it on higher quality cameras. That was a big decision for me at the start, because it improves the look of the show – it looks more like 35mm film – but it also costs a lot more."

Series three leaves the show's native Bristol behind as the production – and the characters – decamp to *Gavin & Stacey* country (namely Barry in South Wales) following the momentous events at the end of series two. After Mitchell went postal and Annie got dragged to Hell, the characters needed to get away from Bristol. "Staying in the old house would have been like staying in a dead relative's house," says Trethowan. "It was Annie's house."

Speaking of Annie, Trethowan assures us she won't be out of the action for long, in a *Search For Spock*-style plot arc. "Annie is just as much a part of the show as you'd want her to be, from the word go. She is crucial to the show, we wouldn't want to be without her."

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EastEnders's Lacey Turner joins the cast as the mysterious Lia Shaman.

We're guessing George will find a new sofa to love.

Relocation, relocation

It's goodbye to Bristol's pink house, and hello to a B&B in Barry Island

The famous pink *Being Human* house in Bristol was arguably as much a character in the show's first two series as George, Annie and Mitchell. But circumstances (both in the show's storyline and in the real world of BBC corporate decision making) have forced a move to a new base for series three, and Phil Trethowan is well aware they had to find somewhere pretty special...

"The new house was a real dilemma because obviously the pink house has become iconic. The big challenge was how to find a location that just had bags and bags of character so that hopefully rather than viewers thinking, 'I wish we were back in the pink house,' they're just thinking, 'Wow!'

"What we arrived at is an old bed and breakfast called Honolulu Heights, that was decorated at the height of '70s kitsch, and hasn't been touched since. So what was once this really trendy place is now somewhere between an eyesore and really fucking cool. You wouldn't want to live there because the wallpaper would give you a headache but by god it'd be a great place to visit.

"The other brilliant thing about it is that it gave us the opportunity to build a new set. It's much, much bigger than the old set, at least three times the size, with a lot more rooms, including a cellar and an attic space. The guys are loving shooting in it. You can get some really nice angles in there."

Expect more lycanthrope action third time around.

There will also be more werewolf action this series, especially regarding their relationship with vampires, who have for centuries been making them fight for the bloodsuckers' entertainment. Enter new character McNair, played by Robson Green.

"We felt that we'd really explored the broader vampire world pretty extensively," says Trethowan. "So with Robson we wanted to explore the broader world of werewolves a bit more and so he brings all that world into the show with him."

But will Robson fans get the chance to see him in the buff?

"I can tell you exclusively that you will be not be disappointed. And I can also tell you Robson's in good shape. He definitely works out."

Happy, smiling, snarling faces...

"Annie is as much a part of series three as you'd want her to be. She is crucial to the show"

There's also a new werewolf costume for McNair, the old costume having to perform time-share duties. "The werewolf we had before doubled as George and Nina in full transformation. Now we've got a whole new werewolf. We had the idea that each werewolf lineage as it were, had a slightly different look about them. McNair looks a bit more grizzly." But what of Herrick? He unexpectedly returned in the series two finale, but he won't be a fully functioning Big Bad from episode one, warns Trethowan.

"Herrick comes into his own, as it were, in the latter half of the series, but we've also got threats and stories that are set up in the first half of the series. It's not as if Herrick replaces them, it's sort of Herrick enhances them and they all become one big story that powers through to the end of the series."

He also promises that – aware of some criticism aimed at series two that the core characters spent too much time apart – the stories have been crafted to accommodate the camaraderie that viewers enjoyed in season one.

"Those scenes where you've got all four of them together, or any combination of two or three of them, they work well. So yes, there is more of an eye on stories that unite as well as divide, as it were."

He also confirms that the pre-teaser flashbacks introduced in season two are back, that the main characters *don't* have a local ("I made a note to myself earlier that, touch wood, if we get a series four we should sort that out"), and that series creator Toby Whithouse's episodes will once again top and tail the series. Regular *Who* director Colin Teague is back, helming the opening episodes once again, and Lisa McKee who wrote the brilliant series two episode about the fake psychic also returns. But surely the real question is, just how Welsh is the new series going to feel?

"What I don't like is when you locate somewhere and you don't embrace it," says Trethowan. "We embrace the Welshness." SFX

Being Human *returns to BBC Three in early 2011.*

Sci-Fact! Radio 4 is reuniting the League of Gentlemen for a haunted house vigil over Halloween.

That's what you get for doing a bad murder.

PSYCHOVILLE

Trick Or Treat

Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith are dressing up for Halloween

SFX EXCLUSIVE! Creator interview and new pictures!

"Bohemian Rhapsody" never looked so creepy.

SPOILER THREAT!

The massive explosion that may or may not have wiped out the principal players could easily have spelled the end for *Psychoville*. But the brilliantly twisted comedy from *The League Of Gentlemen*'s Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith is coming back for a second series next year, and in the meantime there's a Halloween special to fill in a few holes. "You can't presume you're going to get a second series, but we wrote an ending that left a glimmer of light for us," Shearsmith tells Red Alert. "First of all, BBC Two said it wanted us to do a second series, and then asked if we'd like to do a Christmas special. We said that a Halloween special would fit more nicely with *Psychoville*, so we had to come up with this idea that would bridge the two series – it's kind of standalone, but it's also informative of what happened at the end of the last series as we get four stories about some of our old characters."

The hour-long special focuses on a researcher from *Dale Winton's Overnight Ghost Hunt* (Shearsmith), who goes to the ruins of Ravenhill Hospital on a recce for his new series. "It's a portmanteau homage, like *Tales From The Crypt*, where you get four stories interwoven with a linking device," Shearsmith explains. "We wanted to get some backstory on how some of the characters arrived at Ravenhill, and to tally that a little bit with urban myths, so each one's got a familiar feel to it. The researcher has bad information about the histories of the characters, so there are misremembrances and odd things about how some of the characters arrived there, and hopefully it ties up neatly."

The Halloween special welcomes a *Psychoville* newcomer in the form of Hogwarts vet Imelda Staunton, playing what the Beeb calls a "sharp-suited, shadowy figure with mysterious motives". "Her part is bigger in the series," Shearsmith teases. "She's our new person pulling the strings and takes over where Eileen Atkins's Nurse Kenchington left off. It was a great coup to get Imelda. We wrote it with her in mind. You can never be sure whether anyone's going to be free or will want to do it, but she was delighted. It was great that we were able to make it work between Harry Potters!"

The black suit – universal sign of moral flexibility.

Though Shearsmith will confirm that he and Pemberton will be take on new roles in series two (the words make-up artist and librarian are mentioned), he's more tight lipped about which members of the old guard survive the aforementioned big bang. "I don't want to say who's alive because everyone thinks they're all dead," Shearsmith says. "But at the end, Nurse Kenchington comes in asking for this locket with a letter K on it and it ends up being on Robert, who's about to be eaten by a witch. We've had to untangle what was a very strange ending, but I think we've managed to do it, and the pursuit of the locket and where Robert is form the over-arching strand of the second series."

The* Psychoville *special will air on BBC Two over Halloween. Series two will arrive in early 2011.

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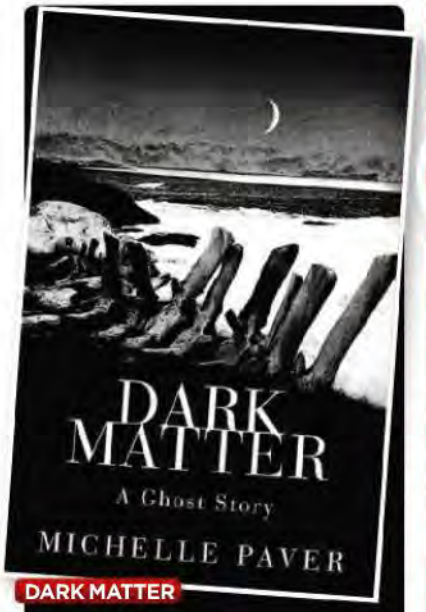


DARK MATTER

A NIGHT'S TALE

Kids' author Michelle Paver goes dark

Like *30 Days Of Night*, Michelle Paver's *Dark Matter* is set in a harsh environment where the sun doesn't shine all winter. But it is not vampires but ghosts that aspiring physicist Jack Miller encounters at a remote Arctic base – which, the author says, was perfect for her spooky tale.

"With a ghost story, you always think, 'as long as the characters can make it through to dawn, they'll be alright,' but if dawn is not for another four months, they've got a problem," says Paver, who embarked on *Dark Matter* after completing her Stone Age-set series The Chronicles Of Ancient Darkness. "It's the oldest fear of all: what is at the back of the cave? With my background with hunter-gatherers, I realise that there are these circuits in the brain that were laid down thousands of years ago. The whole fear of darkness is so atavistic."

However, the sky is seldom totally black. "There are variations in the darkness and you can actually see a bit with these kind of grey shapes, which you think could be boulders or a polar bear," she explains. "Having read the journals of trappers who lived up there in a hut on their own for four months, you wonder how on earth they survived and kept their sanity.

"Dark matter is this thing that you can't see but you know it's there," Paver continues. "The book is not a SF story yet there's a SF metaphor running through it, which is very, very scary because you don't know what's out there in the dark." SFX

Dark Matter *is published by Orion on Thursday 21 October.*

Image © Giuliano Bevilacqua/Rex Features (1)

DATA FLOW

SF TV round-up

RIP SATOSHI KON
Anime legend Satoshi Kon, director of *Perfect Blue*, *Paranoia Agent* and *Paprika* has passed away at the age of 46. He was widely regarded as one of the most distinctive voices in Japanese animation. At the time of his death he was working on his fifth movie, *The Dream Machine*, but no announcement has yet been made regarding its future.

ODE TO JOYSTICKS
A reminder that voting for this year's Golden Joysticks closes at the end of October. They're the only gaming awards voted for by the public, and top sci-fi titles in contention include *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, *Halo 3*, *Bioshock 2* and *Metro 2033*. Go to **www.goldenjoystick.com** to have your say.

Don't Quote Me!

"I am a coach, not Harry Potter. He is a magician. Magic is fiction and I live for football which is real"

Football management Special One **Jose Mourinho** finally admits that he didn't go to Hogwarts.

Ass. Will. Be. Kicked.

CHAOS WAR

A Deity In The Life

Hercules is going to war

As Thor's upcoming big screen debut proves, gods are in fashion right now. Continuing the trend, Hercules returns to comics for *Chaos War*, and writers Greg Pak and Fred Van Lente are thrilled to be bringing the deity back to the fold. "It's the culmination of the *Incredible Hercules* saga Greg and I have been building toward since *Sacred Invasion*," says Van Lente. "We've had a big event story in mind for years – it's a total blast to have it all coming true," adds Pak.

The series features some heavy Marvel hitters, including Thor himself, the Silver Surfer and Galactus to take on the malevolent god Mikaboshi. "Since *Secret Invasion* Mikaboshi has been roaming the multiverse, destroying and absorbing alien pantheons, until he's arrived as the Chaos King, ready to wipe out all of reality and become the only thing in existence as he once was, before Creation started," says Van Lente. "He also has big scary teethies now," continues Pak. "Wait till you see penciller Khoi Pham's design. It's insanely creepy."

Asked what challenges the story poses for Pham, Van Lente replies, "You mean other than the massive army of alien slave gods, hordes of the damned swarming through the ruptured gates of Hell, every major deity mounting the battlements of their respective pantheons, Galactus, Eternity and some entities even more powerful...?"

Hercules' new powers will be revealed in battle. "Let's just say this is a Hercules the Marvel Universe has never seen before – and he'll be affecting Earth-616 for some time to come," says Van Lente. *"And* he's got a cape!" chips in Pak. SFX

Chaos War *will be published by Marvel in October.*

Sci-Fact! Showrunner David Fury played a newsreader in *Dr Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*.

SFX EXCLUSIVE! Showrunner interview

TERRA NOVA

Making Prehistory

Going back in time for Spielberg's dino drama

SPOILER THREAT

Steven Spielberg and Peter Chernin's futuristic TV drama *Terra Nova* is preparing to shoot its pilot this autumn in Australia, with executive producers Brannon Braga (*FlashForward*) and David Fury (*Lost*) handling day-to-day showrunning duties on the ambitious series. The two-hour pilot will probably debut in spring 2011, with the series coming that autumn.

Why such a delay? Fury tells Red Alert that *Terra Nova* needs a lot of time to prep and produce because of its massive scale and trans-Pacific production. "We have a lot of budgetary concerns because this is a very expensive show," he explains.

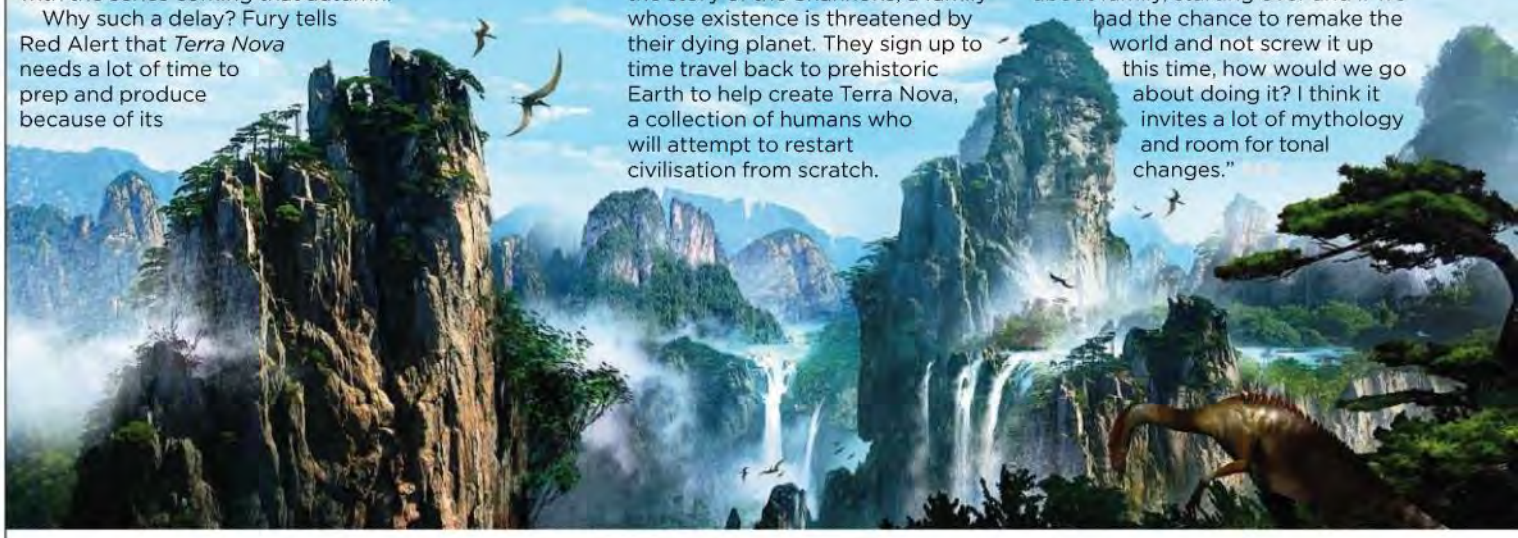
Jason O'Mara, Sam Tyler from the US *Life On Mars*, will star.

As such the series will be a mix of extensive green screen and location shooting, led by Emmy winning executive producer/director Jon Cassar (*24*). "We chose the area around the Gold Coast because it has so much that is there in terms of landscape that we can just point the camera at an actor and not worry about what's behind them."

Initially set in 2149, the series tells the story of the Shannons, a family whose existence is threatened by their dying planet. They sign up to time travel back to prehistoric Earth to help create Terra Nova, a collection of humans who will attempt to restart civilisation from scratch.

Terra Nova was developed by Spielberg, who Fury says remains a hands-on producer as the show develops. "He's certainly been on top of everything. We've gotten notes that he's very happy with it."

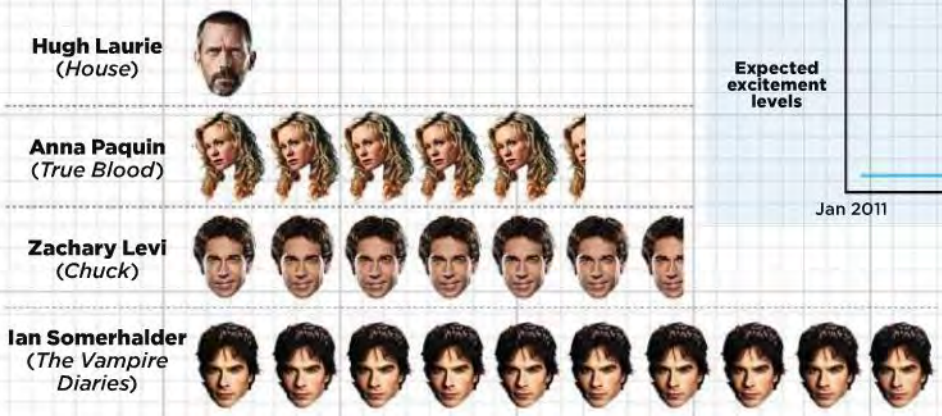
Fury says the series will be an action-adventure yarn that should appeal to diverse audiences. "Inherent in the story there needs to be a lot of secrets untold, so we'll introduce some shifting of tones," he reveals. "Within the context of that, we want to do self-contained stories as *Buffy* did. We don't want a show so densely mythologised that people can't come into it four episodes in because at its heart it's about family, starting over and if we had the chance to remake the world and not screw it up this time, how would we go about doing it? I think it invites a lot of mythology and room for tonal changes."

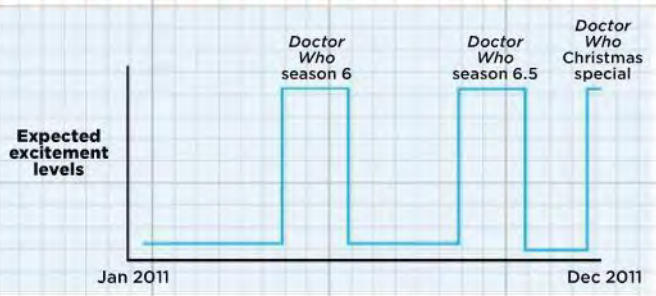


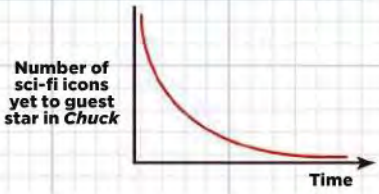
Vital Statistics

Lies, damned lies and yes, you guessed it – all with a sci-fi theme

How many sci-fi stars is one Hugh Laurie worth?*







*Based on *TV Guide*'s top earners in television.

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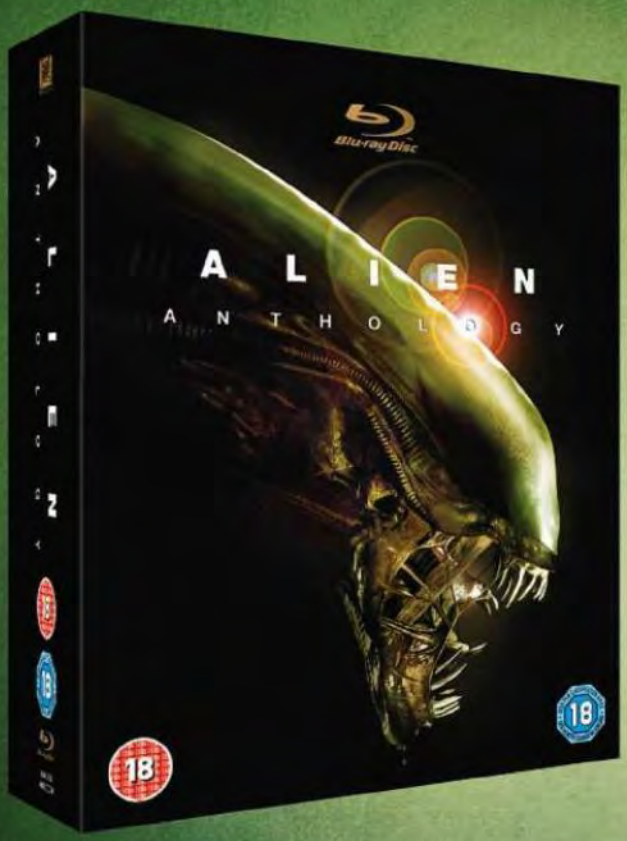

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Sci-Fact! A *Warm Bodies* movie is currently being developed by *Twilight* producers Summit.

Lost's Kiele Sanchez is the new Stella Oleson.

30 DAYS OF NIGHT: DARK DAYS

To Live And Die In LA

The vamps relocate from Alaska

The first *30 Days Of Night* didn't end well for many of those involved. The vampire invaders of a small town in Alaska had been all but wiped out, while hero Eben Oleson had been chargrilled to perfection. In fact, pretty much the only one to emerge unscathed was Eben's wife Stella and she's back in sequel *Dark Days* to take the fight back to the vampires in LA (Kiele Sanchez replaces Melissa George in the role). "It goes in a different direction to the first graphic novel and in a great way," director Ben Ketai tells Red Alert. "As opposed to recycling the story it takes the wonderful character of Stella and propels her into this revenge mission. It becomes more of an action/war movie. It's like what *Aliens* is to *Alien*."

"Story-wise it is 180 degrees from a movie that is entirely set in the dark," adds producer JR Young. "Los Angeles is known for having a lot of sunshine, which becomes really important in terms of the atmosphere – you feel the sunlight bleeding in and it forces the vampires into dark spaces. By the nature of this film they're hidden in places you don't want to go."

With *30 Days Of Night* creator Steve Niles on board, *Dark Days* explores mythology only touched on in the first movie. "The graphic novel opened the door to delving deeper into the way the vampires operate," says Ketai. "We have the character of Lilith who shows up as the queen of the vampires. In order to keep themselves organised they look to her as a leader, so going after Lilith gives Stella a great goal." **SFX**

Rivalling R-Patz in all "Sexiest Vampire" polls...

***30 Days Of Night: Dark Days** is available on DVD and Blu-ray from Sony Pictures Home Entertainment on 11 October.*

VIEW SCREEN

SF TV round-up

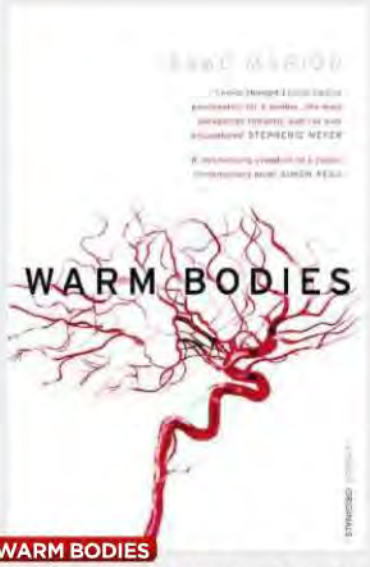
NEWBIES
BBC Four has announced it's going to be giving Douglas Adams's *other* creation Dirk Gently his very first TV outing in a one-off pilot scripted by Howard "*Misfits*" Overman, who told us it'll be a new story based in Gently's world. Counting backwards to BBC Three, we're sorry to report that the Paul Cornell-scripted Pulse hasn't been picked up for a series, but the news that Touch (a show from *Skins* writer Jack Thorne about an ordinary guy who discovers he can see the dead) has been picked up for six episodes makes that pill easier to swallow. And on BBC Two, *Luther* writer Neil Cross is giving MR James a modern reworking for Christmas in ghost tale Whistle And I'll Come To You.

Continued on p17.

Don't Quote Me!

"The emphasis on the toys, it's like the cart driving the horse. If it wasn't for that the films would be done for their own merits. The creative team wouldn't be looking over their shoulder all the time"

Original *Star Wars* producer **Gary Kurtz** on where the franchise went wrong.



WARM BODIES

MINDLESS PASSION

Who says zombies can't fall in love?

Romeo And Juliet themes have been tackled with vampires, werewolves and other mythical creatures, but zombies have always seemed a bit too, well, apathetic to have a decent stab at literary romance. Until now. In Isaac Marion's debut novel *Warm Bodies*, a zombie called R decides to put the brain-eating on hold when he meets a girl called Julie.

"I thought it would be an interesting perspective to explore, because no-one really gets to see inside the head of the creature," explains Marion. "I imagined what the zombies' perspective would be on what they do, which is just stand around doing nothing and then go and kill people."

Marion says he's sticking closely to zombie mythology. "They don't break any traditional rules, because no-one in this world is aware that they have minds," he says. "They look like mindless corpses because they don't ever actually interact with the humans, but the zombies have inner life – they don't just show it because they don't care about anything." Marion's also given a reason for the undead passion for eating human cerebellum: "It gives them a taste of what it's like to be alive. It's kind of a drug to them."

Which is rather similar to what R goes through when he falls in love. "I don't think that it's as simple as love brings him back to life, but doing something different triggers an evolution in him," Marion explains. "Then Julie helps it along by showing who she is and with that a strange relationship develops."

***Warm Bodies** is published by Vintage on Thursday 28 October.*

Image © Rex Features (1)

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Seen an SF movie or TV show shooting near you? Did you get any pictures? Why not send them to Image Bank at sfx@futurenet.co.uk

We've gone overboard on pictures, but don't have an art attack

SUPERIOR CONTENT

He's just launched his own magazine, *Kick-Ass* is doing nicely on DVD and numerous other movie projects are at various stages in development but that doesn't mean that Mark Millar is turning his back on writing comics. His latest creator-owned title, *Superior*, arrives in October, and we've got some of Leinil Francis Yu's artwork to show you. It's the story of a boy with multiple sclerosis who gets to become his favourite screen hero, and as with Kick-Ass and Nemesis, Millar's auctioned off the name of the lead character to raise money for charity.

GREAT SCOTT!

It's hard to believe that *Back To The Future* is 25 years old. Yes, the '80s fashions and Huey Lewis have dated it somewhat, but other than that it feels like it could have been made yesterday. Which is why, of all the films coming to the cinema this month, we're most excited about its re-release (1 October).

But how different would history have been had Universal chosen to go with one of legendary poster artist Drew Struzan's original designs rather than the now-iconic shot of Marty McFly climbing into a DeLorean. You can see this and loads more top Struzan designs in the ace *The Art Of Drew Struzan*, available from Titan Books from 24 September.

BLOCK PARTY

Star Wars, DC Universe, *BSG*... Everyone's getting in on the MMO bandwagon these days. The latest franchise to go massively multiplayer and online is LEGO, who launch *LEGO Universe* at the end of October. "We got an email from LEGO asking if we'd be interested in doing an online project," says Ryan Seabury, creative director of the game and owner of the world's best business card (it's a little LEGO man!). "We were like, yeah, this could be the best game of all time. You've got past, present future, every genre imaginable – sci-fi, fantasy, anything could appear and you can mash it altogether and it'll still make sense. Nothing else can do that."

Back To The Future ® Copyright Universal City Studios, Inc. 1985. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission.

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VIEW SCREEN

SF TV round-up

NEWBIES (CONT)

It's been a busy month in the States, where two of the hottest names in showrunning have new gigs on their slates. Former *Battlestar Galactica* main man Ronald D Moore is developing an as-yet-untitled series for NBC that's being billed as "Harry Potter for adults", while *Pushing Daisies* creator Bryan Fuller is adapting John Christopher's The Lotus Caves into a series for Syfy. There may also be new work for *Supernatural* creator Eric Kripke, who's been linked to a TV adaptation of Neil Gaiman's Sandman. With Stephen King adaptation *Haven* currently airing on Syfy, King Jr, aka Joe Hill, is about to get a TV show of his own following word that his Locke & Key comic has been picked up by Fox. And finally, Syfy are making Neverland, a Peter Pan prequel with Bob Hoskins reprising his *Hook* role as Smee. Rhys Ifans and Anna Friel also star.

Continued on p20.

Don't Quote Me!

"I was telling him for a long time to get out of that thing because there is only room for one captain on the ship"

James Cameron recalls his advice to Guillermo Del Toro before he left *The Hobbit*.

ALIENS

Heaven Sent

The xenomorphs are off to Jupiter in new graphic novels

As a teenager of the '80s, Liam Sharp counts many of the artistic talents behind Ridley Scott's original *Alien* among his most formative influences. Now the Derby resident has written and drawn *Fast Track To Heaven*, the first in a new line of graphic novels for Dark Horse, which draws on many of those early inspirations.

"HR Giger brought that inspired organic sheen to the Alien with the bio-mechanical theme that runs through most of his work," he tells Red Alert. "Moebius was great with the costume and character designs. He used colours that you wouldn't expect; it's the future, but it's still grimy. Chris Foss brought industrial reality to his spaceships on his book covers, and that translated well to the screen. There are echoes of all their work in there in that I've attempted to capture the same elements, the believability, the quirky reality and the isolation."

The story is set in the same time period as Alien. "You'll recognise the costumes that riff off the movie," explains Sharp. "But other than that it's entirely self-contained and unrelated, except that there's an Alien in it and references to Weyland-Yutani."

The sinister corporation also appears in *Fast Track To Heaven*. "They're sponsoring this rickety old ecological set-up that is orbiting Europa, one of Jupiter's moons," Sharp reveals. "It's the only other planet in our solar system that supports life. So these rudimentary worms and other life forms are practically family. Heaven is the nickname of a space station above the planet that is linked via a space elevator to another station under the ice, which is called Hell. Two pods run up and down the elevator – one called 'The Beagle' and the other 'The Bible' – but one of them has stopped half way up. They have no radio contact so another team has to see what's up..." *SFX*

"You'll recognise the costumes that riff off *Alien* the movie"

Fast Track To Heaven *is published by Dark Horse in October.*

AFTERLIFE The stars of sci-fi past, in the now

THEN

NOW

#43 William B Davis

Cigarette Smoking Man in *The X-Files*

William B Davis is best known as *The X-Files'* creepy Cigarette Smoking Man, but his 30-year career involving stints in theatre across the world means his memoirs are about more than lurking in shady corners – although the name gives a nod to his most popular role: "The working title is 'Where There's Smoke...'. It should be published within the year. It's a unique form of narrative non-fiction and I'm proud of it – the rights are still available!" We spoke to him at London Film and Comic Con. **www.london filmandcomiccon.com**

What's the strangest request you've ever had from a fan?

» I didn't get too many strange requests, because people were frightened of me. I remember getting into an elevator and a woman went, "My god! You look like the man from *The X-Files*," and I said, "Well I am." She called the rest of her family and had me stand in the elevator signing autographs.

Did you get any souvenirs from the set?

» I got nothing, no props or anything. Very disappointing.

Would you want to go back and play the Cigarette Smoking Man again?

» I'd love to do that. He became a very rich, complex character and it became really interesting as he went into different issues and problems. It's always fun to play the serious, the intense, the ruthless, all those things you don't allow yourself to be.

Would any of CSM's skills have helped you in real life?

No! [laughs] Although one skill I did develop came about because everyone wanted a cigarette autographed. I got good at that.

What do you think CSM would be doing now?

» I think he's in a cave in Pakistan and he has a long beard and is going under another name...

What would it say on his tombstone?

» [Smiles and shakes his head] He's not going to die. **www.williambdavis.com**

Image © Kristin Callahan/Rex Features (1), Getty Images (1)

Sci-Fact! Wyle's surname is pronounced "Why-lee".

Even after the end of the world, fans still chased Wyle for an autograph.

Derelict chic is so in this year.

ER's Noah Wyle, with post-apocalyptic facial hair.

FALLING SKIES

Close Encounters Of The Worst Kind

Spielberg's TV war of the worlds

Steven Spielberg has been a busy bee developing new series for the small screen. And with *Terra Nova* (see page 12) going back to prehistoric *Jurassic Park* territory, *Falling Skies* will mine another topic close to the legend's heart – aliens invading Earth. Set in the not-too-distant future, *Falling Skies* stars Noah Wyle (*ER*) and Moon Bloodgood (*Terminator Salvation*) as those among the few who've survived a global alien genocide. They must band together to fight their oppressors and restore mankind's future.

Co-executive producer and lead writer Mark Verheiden (*Battlestar Galactica*) is helping shape the show following the lead of the pilot. "I thought it was the best pilot of the fall season," Verheiden tells Red Alert. "My background is science fiction, but I also love telling human stories and that's what *Falling Skies* had. It had the heart and humanity that I love to work with, but also spaceships and science fiction."

The pilot opens after the initial invasion and the series will continue from that point forward. "In the context of the series, when they attacked they took out all our technology, communications and electronics. They killed the military. Our people are at a loss so we're in a big hole when we start. In the first season, the first thing they have to figure out is how they deal with these things because they are unlike anything they've ever seen before."

As to what the aliens' beef is with humanity, Verheiden assures us there is a reason for the mayhem but, per Spielberg's wishes, it won't be clear from the onset. "These aliens have a plan, but it's a slowly unfolding plan so don't expect an answer in the pilot. But I think we can be sure that there's meaning behind what they're doing, and what they're doing is very strange."

With the military gone, ordinary folk are left to defend themselves.

"One thing that's fun for us is that the people are so grounded"

A more important focus will be how what's left of humanity reacts to the devastation. "We spent a lot of time in the writers' room talking about the French Resistance and movies like *The Great Escape* and *Saving Private Ryan*. It's about people who go up against overwhelming odds and find great heroism inside themselves and still hold onto their families. A key note of the show is not losing what made you human, and what are you fighting for? I think one thing that's really fun for us is that the people are so real and grounded. It's set today and it's not technologically based. They're up against a deadly enemy, and that aspect is science fiction, but the people are just us – people who find themselves thrown in a desperate situation. Out of that they find not just the courage to fight back, but also hope and love with each other. They hold onto the things that make us human while finding a way to fight back."

Falling Skies *will premiere in the US in spring 2011.*

ZOMBIE-AID

RAISING FROM THE GRAVE

Who says the undead can't be altruistic?

We've all seen enough movies to know that zombie infections can spread pretty fast. But when Zombie-Aid founder Carl Whiteley decided to organise his own US-style zombie walk in Manchester, little did he know that he'd have 3,000 wannabe undead turning up.

"It was all through Facebook," he tells Red Alert. "As we were getting it all together people in Manchester found out about it, passed the message on, a few radio stations picked up on it and word spread really fast. It was quite unbelievable. I expected mainly students and twentysomethings to turn up, but it was actually mainly families. It was just something different."

Look at the face – vacant, with a hint of sadness. Like a drunk who's lost a bet...

Since that first outbreak back in July 2009, the infection's spread to other events across the country. Aside from his rule that that no-one but good causes makes any money out of the zombie walks (Zombie-Aid's main charity is the Make-A-Wish Foundation), the events welcome all species of the undead. "We've had Snow White, Wayne and Garth... It's absolutely however you want to do it," he says. "Fast, slow – just as long as they behave!"

And from those lumbering origins, Zombie-Aid's about to take on the chart with its very own single, a Double A side featuring "Zombie Freaks" by Resist, and "Zombies Wild" by Uncle Rotter. "Like Live Aid, we've got Zombie-Aid, so I thought we've got to do a single," Whiteley explains. "We're releasing it with the aim of getting to Halloween number one, because no-one's ever done that. If we do it we'll make music history and probably start a new Halloween tradition!"

The Zombie-Aid single is released to download on Sunday 24 October. www.zombie-aid.com

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Sci-Fact! Despite what Brian Yuzna says, scorpions are actually arachnids.

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"I only ordered the calimari!"

AMPHIBIOUS 3D

A Sting In The Tail

Re-Animator's Brian Yuzna swaps mutation for creature carnage

"It is a really fun horror movie," says Brian Yuzna of his new outing, *Amphibious 3D*. "We had a great reaction to the trailer when we debuted it at Cannes."

Yuzna, the man who was a certified terror titan in the '80s and '90s thanks to splatter classics like *Society*, *Bride Of Re-Animator* and *The Dentist*, is now embarking on his first directorial effort in five years. "I moved to Jakarta in Indonesia a few years ago," he explains. "While I was there I set up a label called Komodo Films. The industry is quite undeveloped over there but I began making some headway on a series of 3D films last year which is how I came to shoot *Amphibious*. It was very challenging, and an epic story of itself in terms of making it, but it has come out really well."

Moreover, *Amphibious* will feature a spooky subplot which ties into the Asian ghost culture. "I tried to integrate the supernatural Indonesian culture with this story about a giant insect menacing a sea port," Yuzna smiles. "However, at heart, this is a good old fashioned monster movie. It is about an enormous sea scorpion in the North Sumatra sea leaping out at the audience in 3D."

And with Yuzna back in the director's chair he does admit that there might be a chance to continue his classic *Re-Animator* series. "It is always a possibility," he laughs. "But right now I am waiting to see if a remake might happen. My problem is that I am so attached to the property I won't just sell it and let someone else make it. I have to be completely involved and that is a stumbling block whenever it comes to discussing an all new version of the original."

"This is a good old fashioned monster movie"

Image © Carolyn Contino/BEI/Rex Features (1)

VIEW SCREEN

SF TV round-up

SHOWRUNNING
There'll be not one but two series of Doctor Who in 2011. Alas, it's not quite as good as it sounds – the 13-episode run will be split in half. Elsewhere in the Whoniverse, the US Torchwood has a title ("The New World"), and an American writing team including *BSG* and *Buffy* vet Jane Espenson.

CASTING COUCH
The casting director of Chuck continues to prove he (or she) is well connected in Hollywood with geek-heaven cast additions. Following the recruiting of Linda Hamilton, along come Timothy Dalton and ex-Master Eric Roberts. And the casting peeps on V have lined up original series Diana Jane Badler and *Reaper* lead Bret Harrison for season two. Plus Syfy are having a *Torchwood* reunion with their superzero show Three Inches, where Naoko "Tosh" Mori will join James Marsters.

Don't Quote Me!

"Why would they cast a middle-aged bald English Shake-spearean actor in this iconic role as captain of the Enterprise? It made no sense"

Probably a good thing **Patrick Stewart** didn't say that 23 years ago.

Bennett started writing *Mr Shivers* when he was just 22.

THE COMPANY MAN

AUSTIN MAESTRO

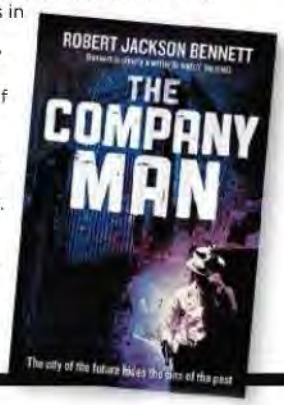
Robert Jackson Bennett follows up *Mr Shivers*

One of the year's eeriest debuts, Robert Jackson Bennett's *Mr Shivers* (just published in paperback) tells the Depression era-set tale of a father's hunt for the scarred, eldritch hobo who killed his daughter.

"What I wanted to do was make it a very spare and almost starved kind of book," the author tells Red Alert. "I wanted to make sure the characters were almost like scarecrows because they'd lost so much. "It makes for an atmospheric piece of American Gothic that also pulls in elements of a fantasy narrative.

"It's got the same framework where there's a group of people who set off on a quest and go through a strange country," he continues. Often recalling Stephen King in its relentlessness and dialogue that's naturalistic yet somehow heightened, it's a book that's all the more admirable when you consider Bennett is still only 26. The follow-up, *The Company Man*, is similarly ambitious. Set in 1919, in an alternate history where the USA has achieved global hegemony thanks to its advanced technology, it focuses on an investigator for a powerful corporation, Cyril Hayes, a man "who is uniquely talented at interviews".

Don't be expecting a cool PI. A John Le Carré fan, Bennett says he likes investigators and spooks "who have lost a lot of hair, gained a bit of weight and also had a few breakdowns along the way". As for what's next, from his home in Austin, Texas, Bennett is writing a book set in the world of vaudeville. As for why Bennett lives in Austin, he first moved to the city for college, but stayed because of its relaxed vibe: "You can wear flip-flops in fancy restaurants," he says, approvingly.



Mr Shivers *is out now from Orbit.* The Company Man *is out in 2011.*

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Sci-Fact! Filoni says he's unlikely to introduce Han Solo: "I think I'm not the guy to define anything more about that."

SFX EXCLUSIVE! Producer interview

STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS

In The Wars

Supervising producer Dave Filoni with the intel on a third season of galactic conflict

Should Ahsoka be worried that she isn't in *Episode III*?

SPOILER THREAT

Before season two, the words "bounty" and "hunter" were being thrown around a lot. Are there any buzz phrases to sum up season three?
You know, I'm never one for summing it all up in one word or theme! In season three, a lot of the characters face dynamic changes and the stakes are higher for them. When we reach the end of the season, some of them have changed so dynamically that they'll never go back to who they were back at the start.

Does that mean the serialised element will be stronger this year?
The Clone Wars will always be done so that, even if you've never seen *Star Wars*, you can still sit down and enjoy it. But there are some longer story threads within the season, which I think we saw an experiment with in season two with the Ryloth episodes.

Will Anakin move further towards his destiny on the Dark Side?
Anakin gets interesting! One of the cards I've been dealt in *The Clone Wars* is that you know Anakin's story doesn't have a happy, cheery Ewok village fireworks ending, so we always have to keep that in the back of our minds. In seasons one and two we've shown Anakin as the hero, and that he cares about people. But I think *The Clone Wars* is an opportunity to feed more dimension into Anakin's character so that we see that his ideas about the Republic and what it stands for formed over a longer period of time – also to show how he's exploited by how he made that decision to side against Mace Windu, why did he make it so quickly, and is it more than just that Padme's life depends on it? And while he's great friends with Obi-Wan, they have significant differences when it comes to the way politics works and the way the war should be fought. All those things are in the mix in season three.

A trip to the watery planet Kamino is on the cards.

We've already seen original trilogy characters like Boba Fett and Bossk in *The Clone Wars*. Can we expect more in season three?
That's always a possibility. It's a push and pull – you don't want to bring them back and not use them well. I've often been the first person to shoot down using a classic character. We must be cautious about how we choose to affect the original trilogy, and luckily George Lucas is there to help guide that.

Do you have an endgame you're working towards for the show?
Constantly, though if you asked me two years ago what the ultimate end of it was, I would have told you one story, while if you asked me today, I would tell you a different story. As the characters evolve I keep re-evaluating what they need to be to fit as well as possible into the *Star Wars* saga as we know it. George and I debate it from time to time, so it'll be interesting to see how it all comes together at the end. But I've no end date, and that's fine with me. I'll keep making it for as long as George wants to make it. SFX

Will Anakin have cause to develop his pout properly?

The third season of* Star Wars: The Clone Wars *comes to Sky Movies Premiere on 23 October.

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NEWS WARP

All fact, no filler

- New *Doctor Who* games coming to Wii and DS before the end of 2010
- *Paranormal Activity* creators developing Amazon-set TV series called *The River*
- Syfy orders special Christmas episodes of *Warehouse 13* and *Eureka*
- *The Walking Dead* picked up for second season before the first has aired
- Jessica Alba to reunite with *Sin City* director Robert Rodriguez for *Spy Kids 4*
- Brit comics awards the Eagles relocate to MCM Expo
- New George RR Martin comic, *Doorways*, published by IDW in November
- *Lost*'s Hurley becomes cover star of latest Weezer album
- *Battlestar Galactica* stars to reprise their roles in upcoming MMO

Don't Quote Me!

"Anthony Hopkins is one of my favourite actors. I will tell you something in confidence: he is a far better actor than I could ever be. I think I made the right choices"

Cameo king **Stan Lee** on the man who beat him to the role of Thor's dad Odin.

Image © Startraks/Rex Features (1)

Not like that nice boy Luke Skywalker at all.

THE FORCE UNLEASHED II

The Apprentice

Darth Vader's secret protégé is back for more...

Okay, it's not quite "I am your father" in the shocker stakes, but the end of Sith-powered videogame *The Force Unleashed* came from well out of leftfield. [If you haven't played the game yet, SPOILERS follow.] Indeed, who'd have thought that Starkiller, Darth Vader's secret apprentice and central character of the game, would be instrumental in the formation of the Rebellion?

While Starkiller finished the game as dead as a Jedi knight after Order 66, however, he's coming back in *The Force Unleashed II* – though we're not quite sure whether he's been reincarnated, a clone or something else entirely. "The game opens about six months after the first, and Vader tells Starkiller that he's a clone of the original Starkiller," teases executive producer and writer Haden Blackman (who's since parted company with LucasArts). "We find out that he's haunted by memories of his past, so Vader tells him that not only is he a clone but a failed clone, and that he's going insane from the accelerated cloning process. Early on you run into General Kota, the Jedi general from the first game, and he tells you Vader's lying, and that the Empire can't clone Jedi – they're way too powerful. Part of his journey is uncovering clues to that and finding out if he's a clone."

Starkiller may be playing a pivotal role in the evolution of that galaxy far, far away, but as in all the best stories, his primary motivation is a woman – namely Juno Eclipse, the Imperial pilot who transported him between missions in *The Force Unleashed*. "This is a much more personal story, and what drives Starkiller is his memory of Juno," explains Blackman. "He goes to rescue Kota, who's been captured by Imperials, in the hope it will lead him to Juno, but when Kota meets him, Kota says, 'You need to help me take down the Empire.' So is he going to help the Rebellion or not? Is his personal quest more important than the galactic quest?"

This time around Starkiller goes from hunter to hunted – Blackman tells us Darth Vader will hire Boba Fett to catch him – so it's probably a good thing he's got new Force skills. And as well as brandishing two lightsabers and having his lightning abilities tweaked, he's going to be dabbling with some old Jedi mind tricks. "When you mind trick people they'll become your allies or throw themselves off cliffs," says Blackman. "At the highest rank they'll become smart bombs. They're so infused by energy that they run into enemies and open fire. After a short time they grab their head like in *Scanners* and blow up in a huge fountain of Force energy." Who said Jedi weren't interested in adventure or excitement? SFX

Has he got his live and neutral wires mixed up?

Starkiller does a wee bit of killing.

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II ***is released by Activision on Friday 29 October. It'll be available on Xbox 360, PS3 and Wii.***

FREEZE FRAME

Hot new trailers dissected

SUCKER PUNCH

The Avengers may have turned up to unite live on stage at this year's San Diego Comic-Con, but running them close for most welcome surprise was this – a 90-second glimpse at *300* director Zack Snyder's certifiably bonkers *Sucker Punch*.

Based on an original idea by Snyder, *Sucker Punch* is the story of young woman Babydoll (*Lemony Snicket*'s Emily Browning), who tries to flee the mental asylum her stepfather has had her committed to when she discovers they plan to lobotomise her. Retreating into an alternative reality as a coping mechanism, Babydoll formulates a plan of escape but to do so must collect five essential objects from the hyperreal fantasy world before time runs out.

With a graphic style reminiscent of Snyder's previous work, encompassing everything from samurai swords in a war-ravaged landscape to dungeons and dragons – the director's description of the film as "*Alice In Wonderland* with machine guns" doesn't seem too far off the mark.

THE FACTS

US RELEASE DATE: 25 March 2011

DIRECTOR: Zack Snyder

STARRING: Emily Browning, Jena Malone, Abbie Cornish, Vanessa Hudgens, Carla Gugino, Jon Hamm, Scott Glenn

WRITERS: Zack Snyder, Steve Shibuya

Get links to this and other trailers via **www.sfx.co.uk**

A dozing Babydoll en route to the madhouse.

...oh, right.

Deflecting bullets with samurai swords in a World War One trench – is she badass or what?

With the fight choreographer from the *Bourne* movies on board, expect some brutal melee scraps.

High School Musical's Vanessa Hudgens experiences some nervy in-flight difficulties.

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Mad Men's Jon Hamm plays bad guy High Roller – the doc set to lobotomise poor little Babydoll.

Three on one doesn't seem very fair...

The ladies of *Sucker Punch* prepare to go on stage.

Machine gun-wielding mechs are on hand to help out.

Fetishistic titillation? Oh no – burlesque is used to explore the characters' internal struggles and launch them into the fantasy world.

As if huge samurais, robot aliens and mutant German soldiers weren't enough, there are dragons too!

Watchmen's Carla Gugino is Madam Gorski – a nurse and a brothel choreographer/ dominatrix in one.

A funeral – but whose?

Nobody puts Baby in the corner (sorry).

Lights out.

THE BUZZ

The *SFX* team says...

Dave B

This looks, brilliantly, like *Return To Oz* with firearms, even if there's slightly too much going on in this trailer – it's exciting, but disjointed. Nevertheless I'm a fan of Snyder's earlier work, I enjoy his hyperreal style; his movies feel like grown-up fairytales, with their own distinctive tone and colour palette. This looks set to continue the trend.

Nick

Buffy The Samurai Slayer? *Showgirls* meets *Dragonheart*? *Charlie's Angels* spliced with *Inception*? Or just a high-dollar grindhouse flick? I've watched the trailer twice and I'm none the wiser.

Rich

Dragons, samurai swords, burlesque, alien worlds... What's not to like? Seeing as Zack Snyder won't be trying to adhere to a graphic novel as he was on *300* and *Watchmen*, I'm hoping he might let himself off the leash and make something truly special.

Jordan

It's worryingly rare for studios to back original mega-budget blockbusters, but whereas *Inception* satisfied the smarty pants in me, *Sucker Punch* appeals to baser urges, instantly shooting to the top of my most wanted list with its irresistible mix of bullets, babes and all manner of fantastical, videogame-esque insanity.

Dave G

You don't exactly learn much about the plot from the trailer, but let's be honest, who'll be going to see this for the plot? It looks like utterly glorious rubbish. Dragons, Zeppelins, girls with guns... I'll be queuing up for tickets.

Russell

This looks like a mix of virtually every film ever made. You've got to admire the chutzpah of sticking dragons, bombers and babes together and believing you've got a winner. Who knows, maybe they have...

Nick Setchfield's Development Hell

Our monthly glimpse into Hollywood's hoped-for future

AQUATAR!

AVATAR 2

James Cameron plans to plunge into the uncharted oceans of Pandora for the *Avatar* sequel – and it's no surprise that the longtime diving nut is already itching to strap on the oxygen tank and flippers to capture some genuine sub-aquatic footage. "Because we'll have to have characters that are in and under the water, we should actually capture them underwater," argues the King of the World, promising seascapes as "equally rich and diverse and crazy and imaginative" as the locales seen in the first film. Given the amount of R&D that went into *Avatar* we wouldn't be surprised if Cameron is even now pouring box-office dollars into bleeding-edge genetic research that could see him spliced with a moray eel. While there's no official greenlight for the dead-cert sequel, he's already wrapping his mind around the proposition. "I'm making notes. I'm not sitting idle." We never doubted it, James.

GIRLS TALK!

THE AVENGERS

You may have noticed a surfeit of the Y chromosome when Marvel unveiled the Avengers line-up at Comic-Con this summer. Before we begin to question SHIELD's policy on equal opportunities recruitment, let's listen to helmer **Joss Whedon**, who acknowledges that while the Black Widow will be the only distaff team-member, she won't be the only woman on screen: "It is true that the movie is only going to have one female Avenger, but she will not be the only female character." So that's a lock for the Aunt May cameo... Whedon also reveals that he's plundering the comic books for inspiration. "It will be a new story that has many things from different arcs of the comics in it. There is no one Avengers story that you can just do the way that you can do the origin of Spider-Man. You really have to cull from the original and *The Ultimates*." Shooting begins February 2011.

REBOOT CASTING WHISPERS!

FANTASTIC FOUR

It's not cosmic rays you have to watch for in Hollywood. Fox's upcoming FF reboot is facing a bombardment of altogether peskier rumour rays – and we all know those things are deadly. The latest chatter attaches some topline talent to the project, with **Adrien Brody** and **Jonathan Rhys Meyers** said to be duelling for the role of elongating tech-head Mr Fantastic. **Bruce Willis**, meanwhile, is tipped to deliver the trademark grumbles and wisecracks of the Thing (no, Willis won't be squeezing himself into a brick suit for his art – the revamped Ben Grimm will be an all-pixel presence, Hulk style). *She's Out Of My League*'s **Alice Eve** is a fave for the new Invisible Girl while *90210*'s **Kevin Pennington** may flame on as the Human Torch, possibly hurling fireballs at *True Blood*'s **Stephen Moyer**, in the frame for monarch of menace Dr Doom. Potential helmers include *V For Vendetta*'s **James McTeigue**, *The A-Team*'s **Joe Carnahan** and trusty Harry Potter warhorse **David Yates**.

> **"I'm making notes. I'm not sitting idle"**
> James Cameron

EIGHTIES COMIC CLASSIC SCREENBOUND!

MAGE

Watchmen and *Hellboy* producer **Lloyd Levin** clearly has a taste for comic book properties. He's just scored the screen rights to *Mage*, **Matt Wagner**'s acclaimed four-colour reinvention of the Arthurian myth. "It has always been a favourite book of mine," says Levin, who also brought us 1991's *The Rocketeer*. "It's one of the great untapped comic books from the '80s renaissance that also spawned *Watchmen* and *Dark Knight [Returns]*." First published in 1984, the strip tells of Kevin Matchstick, a superpowered young man who wields a magical baseball bat that's the reincarnation of Excalibur itself. Wagner's happy, it seems: "It's great that Lloyd is taking on this material because his approach is to capture the essence of the original source material. The timing is good, too, because in the past, [filmmakers] tried to fix the material. Now they try to adhere to the material."

VAMPIRES IN CHOKEY!

NIGHTFALL

There's no escaping vampires – not even behind bars, it seems. *Saw* helmer **James Wan** has signed to direct a big screen adap of **Scott O Brown**'s 2007 graphic novel *Nightfall*, the tale of a right-wing survivalist sentenced to a spell of porridge in a Texas penitentiary. His quality of life dips still further when he discovers that the prison is actually run by the undead, who have a taste for treating the inmates like bottles of warm, fruity red... "The minute I heard the concept I was in," says Wan. "And then reading the graphic novel cemented that. Like *Saw* it's a simple concept that, if executed correctly, will be so cool." "James is the perfect director to bring *Nightfall* to the screen," says producer **Scott Mitchell**

Also Burning

The Kingdom's Matthew Michael Carnahan penning adap of Joe Haldeman's novel *The Forever War* for Ridley Scott... *Wanted*'s Timur Bekmambetov to helm *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*... Fox tackling teen superhero pic *Chronicles*... Tony Todd signed for *Final Destination 5* – or *The 5nal Destination*, as they're calling it... Shia LaBeouf claiming Steven Spielberg's pitch for *Indy 5* is "crazy, it sounds really cool..."... *The Bourne Identity*'s Doug Liman to direct time travel war movie *All You Need Is Kill*... *Ghost Rider: Spirit Of Vengeance* to be 3D... Warner Bros bagging film rights to SF novel trilogy *Heaven's Shadow*... *xXx*'s Rich Wilkes to write the *Iron Fist* movie for Marvel... Josh Hartnett signed for time travel thriller *Tomorrow*, playing a man trying to prevent the murder of his family... *Piranha 3D* director Alexander Aja to adapt manga *Cobra: The Space Pirate*... *Iron Man* scribes Art Marcum and Matt Holloway to pen the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* revamp... Disney bringing us *Monster Witness Relocation Program*... *The Number 23*'s Fernley Phillips in the frame to write Dimension Films' *American Werewolf In London* remake... and many, many more...

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Rosenberg. "James' experience crafting the contained horror in *Saw* will be a big help in informing the visual experience of *Nightfall*."

TERMINATOON?

TERMINATOR 3000

Sometimes we like to imagine the rights situation regarding the *Terminator* franchise as an apocalyptic future warzone, with gleaming cyber-lawyers crushing human skulls underfoot. Hannover House and Red Bear Entertainment recently announced that they were resurrecting the Skynet saga as a $70 million 3D animated feature. While Hannover House claim to own "certain proprietary rights" that would enable them to make a *Terminator* 'toon, new franchise overlords Pacificor wasted no time in laying a cease and desist order on their ass. Hannover and Pacificor are now planning to thrash it out face to face. "We'll show them our money and if the rational brain prevails, they'll take the deal," says Hannover's **Eric Parkinson**. "If not, I can't do it without them."

BACK TO THE '60s!

X-MEN FIRST CLASS

Silver Age Marvel freaks are in for a treat – producer **Bryan Singer** promises that the mutant prequel will be a '60s-set period piece, reflecting the era of the classic Lee 'n' Kirby originals. As well as riffing on the globe-hopping flavour and groovy spy-tech of the Connery Bonds, *First Class* will also unashamedly embrace the spandex, bringing us X-fashion choices closer to the original comic strip uniforms. **Kevin Bacon** is officially onboard as Sebastian Shaw, mutant leader of the New York chapter of the nefarious Hellfire Club, while *Mad Men*'s **January Jones** is signed to play Emma Frost. And expect a plotline that reveals how **James McAvoy**'s Professor X ended up in the wheelchair...

BECKETT'S BACK!

QUANTUM LEAP

Oboy! Sam Beckett is leaping into the body of a big-screen remake. The creation of TV god Donald P Bellisario, *Quantum Leap* debuted in 1989, chronicling Sam's plight as he tumbled through time, inhabiting the lives of souls in need of a touch of feelgood. Original star **Scott Bakula** has revealed that Bellisario is "working on the script and has a big-time Hollywood producer who wants to do it." Don't expect Bakula or fright-shirted sidekick **Dean Stockwell** to reprise their TV roles, though: "Don did say that as he was writing he was having trouble 'getting you and Dean out of my head'. But I know he will do it." There could be a cameo, of course: "Dean and I will have a part in it somehow," vows Bakula. How about this – Brad Pitt peers into a mirror and sees Scott Bakula staring back?

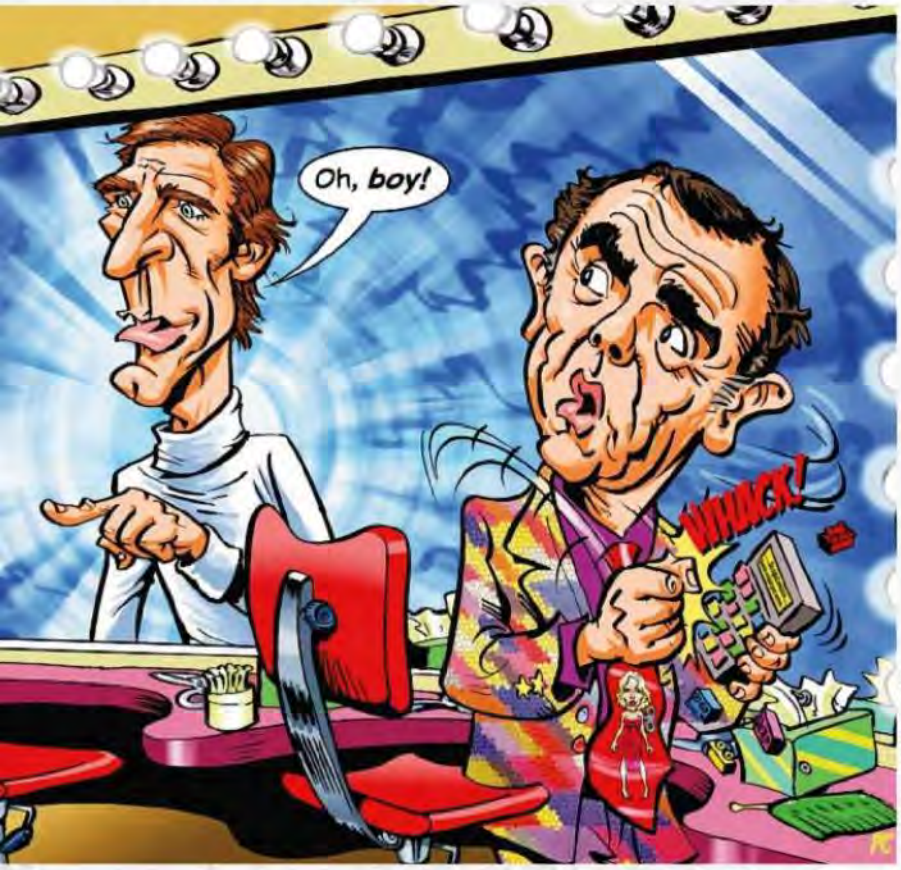

Illustration by **Paul Cemmick**

NEXT MONTH

SFX

ISSUE 202

on sale Wednesday 20 October

HARRY POTTER

Behind the scenes on the beginning of the end

MISFITS

The heroes with ASBOs are back for a second series

IAIN M BANKS

The high lord of the Culture answers YOUR questions

PLUS!

- BACK TO THE FUTURE
- LET ME IN
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- LOADS MORE!

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In Your Dreams

David Langford

» SF writer David Langford has had a column in *SFX* since issue one.

» He is currently working on a hugely expanded third edition of the *Encyclopedia Of Science Fiction* – see progress to date online at http://sfe3.org

» His celebrated SF newsletter is at http://news.ansible.co.uk

Some rash person had to ask: did Christopher Nolan steal the idea for *Inception*? Shiny "new" SF concepts always turn out to have been done before, and bloggers quickly found the smoking ray-gun: a 2002 Scrooge McDuck comic titled "The Dream Of A Lifetime!" In this highly science-fictional drama, Scrooge's arch-foes the Beagle Boys use a special mind-link device to enter, manipulate and steal information from his dreams – all suspiciously like the film.

Now there's no copyright in mere ideas, and anyway Nolan says he's been mulling over this one since he was 16. That would be 1986. Obviously the McDuck scriptwriter invaded Nolan's dreams on a post-1986 mission of pilferage. So presumably did Greg Bear, whose *Queen Of Angels* (1990) has disturbing sequences in which researchers use a special nanotechnological hook-up to enter and explore a psychopath's internal "Country of the Mind". This blasted landscape, stinking of burnt sanity, isn't easy to escape from...

Or perhaps Bear swiped the idea from Pat Cadigan's *Mindplayers* (1988), or Kim Newman's *The Night Mayor* (1989) with its professional Dreamers. Aided by a special machine, two Dreamers must walk the mean streets of a crime lord's noir-movie dreams and halt his naughty activities.

As a media expert, Newman knows every episode of TV's legendary *The Prisoner* by heart, including "A, B And C" (1967). Here the sinister Village authorities, trying as always to find what makes Patrick McGoohan tick, bring in a special gizmo to interrogate him through his dreams. A giant videoscreen displays the dream action as our hero tangles with dubious characters (codenamed A, B and C) fed from datatapes into his sleeping mind. Eventually he manages to seize control of dreamland and leave his tormentors with egg on their faces.

Scrooge's arch-foes use a special mind-link device to enter and manipulate his dreams

The writer of that *Prisoner* story might well have lifted the notion of dream invasion from Roger Zelazny's 1966 SF novel *The Dream Master* – based on his Nebula-winning novella "He Who Shapes" (1965). The Master or Shaper is a future psychiatrist using a special widget, linked via "a crown of Medusa-hair leads and microminiature circuitry", to enter and rearrange his patients' dreams with a view to sorting out their neuroses. Big trouble comes when he takes on someone with a stronger mind than his own.

Zelazny was savvy enough to know that a closely similar problem features in John Brunner's 1958 "City Of The Tiger", which became the novel *Telepathist* (US title *The Whole Man*). Although for once there's no special contraption – it's all done by then-fashionable mental powers – this is a classic treatment of the theme. The undersized, physically crippled hero is a high-powered "curative telepathist" who projects himself into psychotics' obsessive dream-fantasies and breaks them down, hauling the unwilling patient back to sanity like a kid torn brutally away from Xbox addiction.

Naturally Brunner had pinched the idea; or rather, openly admitted his homage to the pioneering "Dreams Are Sacred" by Peter Phillips. This 1948 *Astounding* magazine story was adapted for BBC's *Out Of The Unknown* as "Get Off My Cloud" (1969). A fantasy author has gone into a coma-like fugue state, acting out a dream version of his own sagas. Scientists use a special souped-up encephalograph link to insert the hard-boiled hero into the dream, where he attacks wish-fulfilment with cold common sense.

I'm told Peter Phillips is still with us, aged 90. Think of the royalties he could collect from all the above, if only authors were allowed to copyright their ideas...

David Langford is applying for a special trademark on the word "dream".

Illustration by **Andy Watt**

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WIN! SPACE: 1999 SERIES 1 ON BLU-RAY!

The cult '70s sci-fi hits hi-def...

Fancy a trip back to the future? In 1975 Gerry Anderson, five years on from alien adventuring on *UFO*, presented British viewers with this cult-tastic series set in – you guessed it – the year 1999.

The show focuses on the crew of Moonbase Alpha, who find themselves in dire straits after an explosion sends our friendly satellite spinning through space. Oops. Hanging on for dear life are 300 inhabitants who encounter all sorts of adventures on their mysterious journey... think *Lost*, but with the Island actually being the Moon and the Others being aliens. Oh, and add in some beige jumpsuits, too.

Now's your chance to catch the first series of *Space: 1999* on Blu-ray with a ton of extras! The discs (RRP £79.99) hit stores on **1 November** courtesy of Network DVD, and here's your chance to win the series! To enter text the correct answer code to 87474 or enter online by finding the competition tab on www.sfx.co.uk, where you can also find the full terms and conditions. Best of luck!

Question:
How far away is the Moon from the Earth?
(In reality. Obviously it kept changing on *Space: 1999*.)

A Roughly 100 miles
(text SFXSPACE A to 87474)

B Roughly 238,857 miles
(text SFXSPACE B to 87474)

C Roughly nine billion miles
(text SFXSPACE C to 87474)

Star fleet! A TRIO OF *SPACE: 1999* THESPIAN TALENT

Martin Landau
(Commander John Koenig)

Starting out with a handful of bit-parts on US telly in the early '50s, Landau went on to make his name over a decade later as one of the leads in the hugely popular *Mission: Impossible*. He's still going strong at the grand old age of 82.

Barbara Bain
(Dr Helena Russell)

She co-starred alongside her then-husband Landau in *Space: 1999* but it wasn't the first time the pair had worked together – they were castmates on *Mission: Impossible* too. Most recently she had a guest spot on *CSI*.

Barry Morse
(Professor Victor Bergman)

With more than 100 film and TV credits to his name, Morse is like the Harrison Ford of the small screen with not one, but two iconic TV roles: manhunter Lt Philip Gerard in *The Fugitive* and *Space 1999*'s boffin Professor Victor Bergman.

Terms and Conditions

To enter you can either: (a) text your answer to 87474 at any time between 22nd September 2010 and 20th October 2010; or (b) enter the competition online at the URL above between 22nd September 2010 and 20th October 2010. By sending your text entry you agree to these competition rules. Answers must be received between 22nd September 2010 and 20th October 2010. The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries received between the relevant dates and will be sent the prize free of charge. The winner will be notified within 28 days of the closing date and will be required to give details of a delivery address in the UK to which the prize should be sent. There is no cash alternative available. Normal certification restrictions apply. We reserve the right to substitute the prize for equal value depending on the nature of the prize. Only UK residents aged 16 years and over may enter this competition. No employees of Future plc or any of its group companies or the employees of any entity that has been involved with the administration of this competition or any member of their households may enter this competition. Texts will be charged at 50p plus your normal network tariff. By entering this competition, you consent to us using your personal details to send you information about products and services of Future which may be of interest to you. If you do not want to receive this information, please include the word STOP at the end of your text message.

YOURSFX CONTENTS

Post Apocalypse 30
The funniest, cleverest, snappiest words in this mag. And some letters from you lot.

Ask the SFXperts 34
Will there ever be a question to stump us? (Yes, all those we don't publish.)

Wishlist 38
Spider-Man's swinging back into cinemas in 2012 – and here's what won't be in it.

WRITE IN AND WIN

If you sent us DVDs with your thoughts spoken by your filmed talking head we might send you DVDs in return. If you sent us CDs with your thoughts being voiced we'd consider sending you CDs. But you don't, you send us written words, so we send you words back. To be more precise, a pair of fantastic books from our good pals at The Black Library. This month's lucky letter writers will receive *The First Heretic* by Aaron Dembski-Bowden (a Horus Heresy book) and *Warrior Priest* by Darius Hinks (an Empire Army novel in the Warhammer series). They're right good romps and they're in the shops in November. For more information on Black Library titles head to, *tah-dah!*, www.blacklibrary.com.

THIS MONTH'S LETTERS COMPILED BY
Russell Lewin, Production Editor

A pleasing variety of gabblings from you lot this month – *Doctor Who*, *Lost*, the Vampire Special, Godzilla's bow tie... Plus Danny Dyer gets a kicking and Mel Gibson doesn't. Dive in and enjoy!

NO NO NO, NOLAN

Am I the only one who thinks *Inception* was a pile of poo, over complicated-boring. It was like one of those *Matrix* sequels.

I also seem to be in the minority about Nolan's *The Dark Knight*. No fun, too dark, and as for Heath Ledger's Joker, it was hardly a part he could mess up was it?

Paul Roper, email

Superman: an alien from the planet of Krypton, can fly, has x-ray vision, shoots heat from his eyes and has freeze breath. Christopher Nolan and chums say they want to make it a more realistic version of the Man of Steel. Weren't Richard Donner's and Bryan Singer's versions realistic enough? (He was even stabbed in *Superman Returns*!) Nolan's work on Batman was good but in my opinion not great; do you guys really think he can get the tone right for Superman?

Brendan Cassidy, email

Personally I thought Inception *was a cracking movie, like an old-fashioned heist film with lots of amazing new ideas and techniques. But Brendan, I share your concern. "Dark" superheroics make me groan. I'd far sooner Nolan turned his considerable talents to films more like* Memento *and* The Prestige *than ones with costumed crime-fighters. Don't shoot me, folks.* SFX

BRADLEY RULES!

Your esteemed leader left one very important point out of his Soapbox rant in *SFX* 199. The main reason that magazines are still superior to reading stuff off t'interwebs is because you can read them whilst sat on the loo or in the bath.

The odd splash is going to be an awful lot less expensive if you're using wood-pulp-based media...

The Llama God, email

Good point. Not so nice an image. SFX

HAS *SFX* LOST IT?

Seriously guys?

After six years of *Lost* we get two letters last issue and a

WHO SEASON FIVE: THE LAST WORD

I hope Matt Smith stays for a bit longer *but* I think we have found our Twelfth Doctor in Benedict Cumberbatch (with a name like that he was born to play the Doctor!). Come to think of it, it might be better if he waited and played the Thirteenth Doctor, which I think his "dark" appearance would suit very much.

Adrian Thorpe, Doncaster

I have to say I feel somewhat let down by the Moff's first season. I really enjoyed the first few episodes and thought the opener was particularly strong. But it did seem to meander a bit mid-series and the Van Gogh episode left me cold.

The season finale was pretty good but it felt like it was setting up a big bad for next season and in that sense was a bit of an anti-climax.

Neil Hickman, email

I'm inclined to agree with you, Neil, and like my esteemed colleague Jordan Farley (AKA The Prince, because he looks like a prince from a children's story book) I reckon it was a decent run without any 100% humdingers. Next year's will be better, I wager. SFX

More at ebook-free-download.net or magazinesdownload.com

WWW.BLACKLIBRARY.COM
science fiction and fantasy

Do not adjust your magazine...

mediocre article on a mostly negative view of the show? I am almost, almost lost (!) for words. Month after month we have to suffer gushing views on the hugely overrated *Doctor Who* and yet *Lost*, which is, in my humble opinion, the most literary, complex, and challenging television sci-fi fantasy we have ever seen goes by almost unacknowledged. It really verges upon the tragic, especially considering your wonderful *Lost SFX* Special was such a spirited and intelligent production, full of good grace and celebration.

Graeme Young, Edinburgh

You've kind of answered your own question there, Graeme – the Lost *Special was a whole 132 pages of Islandy goodness with* SFX*'s name on it. Wasn't that enough?*

ULTRAVIOLET-LIGHT

I was surprised to find no mention of *Ultraviolet* in your recent Vampire Special. It was a great piece of television and gave us both Jack Davenport and Idris Elba as two of its stars.

Mark Coale, email

There's never room for everything, Mark. A previous Vampire Special had Ultraviolet *the TV show vs* Ultraviolet *the movie – and what fun that was.*

ROCKULA ROCKS

As I leafed through your Vampire Special, I noticed that there was apparently a rating of every vampire film ever made. Hmm, I wondered to myself, I wonder if they've included *Rockula*, the sadly overlooked but excellent vampire romantic comedy musical from 1990, yet to receive the DVD release it so richly deserves?

And there it was, nestling between *Rockabilly Vampire* and *The Romance Of The Vampires*. You'd given it two stars.

Two stars? Two flippin' stars?! Have you even watched *Rockula*? It deserves far more than that, for the quality of the performances alone, never mind the great music.

I think it only fair that *Rockula* gets the feature within the pages of *SFX* that it clearly merits, and a start to the campaign for an official DVD release.

Tao J Brown, email

We can't quite work out whether this is serious or not, we really can't. We'll get back to you.

YOUR 'ZINES
SELF-PUBLISHED COMIC

PANIC MOON

26 pages, £1.20 inc. P&P (prices vary abroad), available via tinyurl.com/panicmoon or email panicmoonfanzine@googlemail.com

Panic Moon is a pleasingly straightforward, pocket-sized *Doctor Who* fanzine filled with impressive illustrations and vast array of *Who*-based features and reviews.

Inside the latest issue you will find reviews of each season five story, explorations of the Eleventh Doctor and Amy, a review of the Australian *K-9* series, a look at the redesigned Daleks, a round-up of other recent 'zines in 2010's fanzine renaissance, a review of Big Finish's recent audio output, thoughts on the work of Chris Chibnall, on the use of death in Steven Moffat's episodes and on madness, monsters and metaphor in "Vincent And The Doctor". In other words: it's much bigger on the inside! This issue already has great interest and may well be sold out by the time you read this, but work is underway on the next issue (on course for early October) promising more pages and articles covering *Doctor Who* from 1963 to present.

Want us to pimp your fanzine? Send a copy and your details to Your 'Zines, SFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. And then hope really, really hard.

And even this caption has the word "Shadow" in it. See!

SFX SOAPBOX
THE BIT OF THE MAG WHERE ANGRY *SFX* WRITERS GO TO SPOUT OFF

THIS MONTH **IAN BERRIMAN** IS SICK TO THE BACK TEETH OF UNORIGINAL TITLES

The more eagle-eyed amongst you may be aware of a running gag in the reviews section. Fairly often, one of our critiques runs under the heading "This month's obligatory book with 'Shadow' in the title".

Here's the thing about titles. I completely understand why it makes sense if you're making a science fiction film to give it a name that *sounds* like an SF film. It aids immediate understanding. One of my regular tasks is go to through the schedule of forthcoming movie releases, looking for new things that have popped up on there. Looking ahead to the end of 2011, for example, we have *Immortals*, *Fast Five* and *Jack And Jill*. Now, even if I knew nothing about those films, past experience tells me that I can wager with some confidence that the first is our kind of thing, the second is an action movie, and the third is probably, hmm, a romcom. And this proves to be the case.

So I understand the usefulness of drawing on certain buzz words when naming, say, a fantasy novel. The likes of "shadow", "skull" and "sword" are a safe bet, just like putting a picture of a unicorn or a muscle-bound warrior (or even better, a muscle-bound warrior *with* a unicorn) on the cover. You might think that the fact that a novel is stocked in the book shop's fantasy section and features fantastical cover art would be enough to clue in potential readers as to its likely genre, but as someone wise once told me, "It pays never to underestimate the intelligence of the general public". So I understand. I wish it wasn't necessary, though. I receive maybe 50 or 60 books a month, and it's got to the stage where every time I see the words "shadow", "skull" or "sword" I feel like slamming my head into the desk. Not everyone's guilty, of course. We handed out critical maulings to two of Gollancz's recent titles, *Zendegi* and *Finch*, but at least the names were pleasingly ambiguous. Maybe some sort of monthly gong for "Most intriguingly opaque title" is in order?

It frustrates me even more when people come up with a title *so* obvious that's it bound to be used by others. Take *The Dead*. Time was, that was just a short story by James Joyce. Now it's the title of a rather good Young Adult zombie horror by David Gatward. But it's also the name of Charlie Higson's latest zombie book for kids. And a zombie comic written by Alan Grant. And a zombie horror film that screened at Frightfest. This isn't only drearily unoriginal, but causes confusion – every time I refer to *The Dead*, I have to explain which version I'm talking about.

So here's a plea to writers, filmmakers, publishers and studios: how about we call a moratorium on the bleedin' obvious, and you try to be just a *little* more imaginative?

THIS MONTH IN SCI-FI HISTORY

5 YEARS AGO

SFX 136
Nov 2005
Doctor Who leads the British sci-fi TV revolution and we get a sneak peek behind-the-scenes of Joss Whedon's *Serenity*.

10 YEARS AGO

SFX 70
Nov 2000
James Marsters gets interrogated, Couch Potato does Scotland and we get the lowdown on the new *Thunderbirds*.

15 YEARS AGO

SFX 6
Nov 1995
The BBC celebrates 40 years of special effects and Ray Harryhausen talks about creating monster movies.

JUST LIKE MATT!

I thought you might like to see this Matt Smith pic that I've just done.

Ian Ellery, email

Yeah, not bad, not bad. You lot love *drawing Mr Smith, don't you?*

E4 EGREGIOUS

Thanks for finally recognising the pure fanboy fun that suffuses the US sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*. If only E4 treated the show with such respect. E4 ruined the ep "The Wheaton Recurrence" by screening the crucial final scene in trailers *before* the episode had been broadcast! In ruining the show's hilarious denouement in the comic-book store E4 showed utter contempt for their audience.

Martyn P Jackson, Cramlington

Controversial point number one: I reckon that most of the time if you see a scene from late on in the show/movie it doesn't really matter because when you come to watch it you've forgotten it. It's only after *you've seen the show/movie you realise it was a "spoiler". Again, don't shoot me.*

BANGED TO RIGHTS

Congratulations on finally acknowledging the existence of *The Big Bang Theory*. Not really sure why you still think it shouldn't be in *SFX* when Moomins qualify?

Gavin Maillardet, Victoria, Australia

Controversial point number two: I watched five minutes of The Big Bang Theory *and gave up. The way the audience laughed their Yankie socks off at every single line uttered drove me crazy.*

HAPPY DAYS

I remember picking up issue 178 of *SFX* when me and my family went to do the shopping. I remember this because of the look on my dad's face when he saw the magazine. It had Eliza Dushku on the cover, looking sexy as usual, with her head covering up the F, so you can guess what he thought. I had to point out to him it was an SF magazine. Oh, how we laughed.

James Rodrigues, Trowbridge

Hey, that was my first issue! Six years on FHM *then I go and work on a mag with a cover like that. It was like nothing had changed...*

KING MIDAS IN REVERSE

So Joss Whedon is in charge of *The Avengers*. Whedon is one of the most talented people in the

SFX ONLINE

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON WWW.SFX.CO.UK

DAVE GOLDER ON A SHOW MAKING FORUMITES GET HOT AND BOTHERED

Okay, here's a quiz for you. Can you work out what show these forumites were posting about?

"Oh sweet baby jeebus this is bad, bad, bad!" **johnone**

"I can feel my brain getting DUMBERER!!!" **PaulVortex**

"Utter crap. Recorded it last night and watched it this afternoon. Deleted it off the disc half way through." **Shining_Knight**

"Enjoyed it on the level of a special-needs six-year-old." **Clown Asylum**

"I'm not sure I want to spend five hours waiting for the thrilling half-baked conclusion while every character argues with each other pointlessly." **evil minkey**

"Another *Bonekickers* but with a slightly better cast," **Spaced**

Ah, it's been a while since we had a response like that on the forum. Syfy's *Flash Gordon* was the culprit back then. This time, as you may have guessed, it was the BBC's *The Deep* (or *Voyage To The Bottom Of The Barrel* as we've coined it) that was getting the virtual kicking (http://bit.ly/aHzdrc). Spotting plot holes and dodgy dialogue in this soggy mess is fast becoming a national sport: "Just be scientific!" seemed to be a fave, but canny old **Pie Man 70** liked, "It's the size of an industrial hangar!" which was, as he pointed out, "handy, because that's where they shot it."

There was some debate about whether or not it was actually science fiction, and a moment of excitement when, after episode one, **Richard L** suggested the giant sub could be "the Nautilus!" No such luck. Strangely, though, the BBC may have inadvertently backed a winner, because **FreakyBeanz** reflected the thoughts of many posters: "It's probably going to end up as one of those shows that is so bad it becomes unmissable."

And if all this watery talk is making you want to relieve yourself, then don't read the next bit. On the main site we posted a story about Batman peeing in his pants in a Kevin Smith-written DC comic, an event which caused uproar amongst fandom (http://bit.ly/bIZXSA). *SFX* posters took a different approach. "I bet Aquaman goes in the sea when he thinks nobody notices," mused **Stark 101**, while **Zygma_Experiment** pondered: "We can only wonder what happens when the Hulk goes to the loo. And what about Galactus?"

VIDEOLINK

THE BEST OF YOUTUBE AND BEYOND

1 BLACKSTAR WARRIOR

tinyurl.com/blackstar201

Lando Calrissian is the galaxy's baddest mutha in a spoof trailer for a spin-off blaxploitation movie that puts the Cloud City player at the centre of the *Star Wars* universe. Props and costumes are ace, and we really like Vader's funky voice.

2 THE AVENGERS 1952

tinyurl.com/avengers201

Ever wondered what *The Avengers* would look like if it were made before the comic even came out? No, didn't think so. But you'll be happy the Premakes team did after watching the teaser. The team's dodgy outfits are hilarious.

3 STREET FIGHTER LEGACY

tinyurl.com/streetfighter201

Legacy is a mighty impressive fan-made film, with excellent effects and a nifty fight sequence. The video starts slowly with Ryu wandering through a forest before Ken appears – it may seem tedious, but just you wait. Hadouken!

4 LASER CATS 5

tinyurl.com/lasercats201

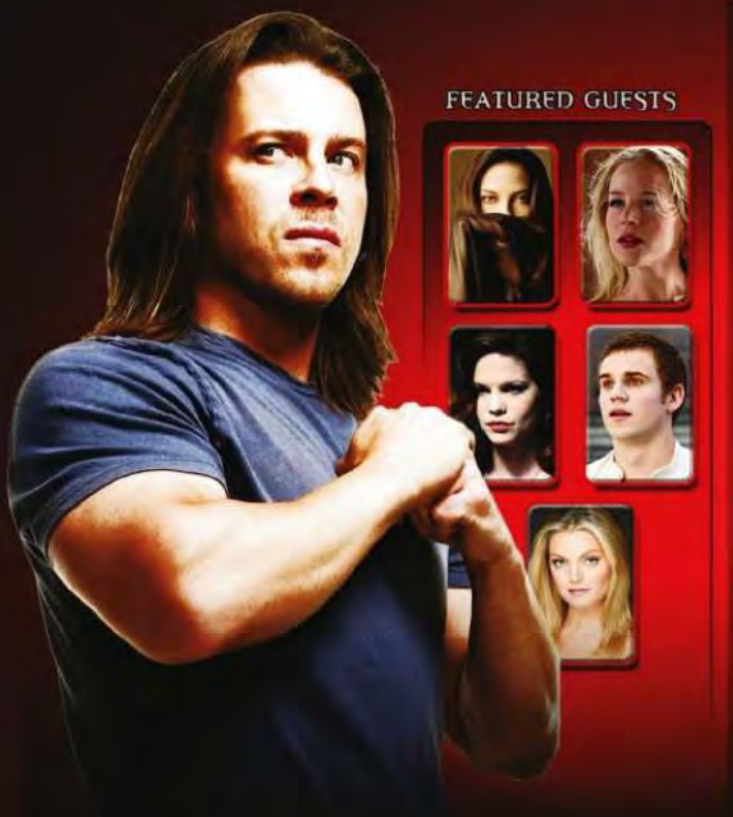
A purposely terrible *Saturday Night Live* spoof of all James Cameron films, featuring James Cameron himself and Sigourney Weaver. In the space of four and a half minutes, it covers *Avatar*, *The Terminator*, *Aliens* and more. Who knew the King of the World had a sense of humour?

5 LION KING/ INCEPTION MASH UP

tinyurl.com/lionking201

Since *Inception* the net has been overflowing with people creating their own mash-up trailers, using footage of other films. We reckon this *Lion King* version is the best so far with some mighty impressive editing and the return of Simba.

More at ebook-free-download.net or magazinesdownload.com



STARFURY CONVENTIONS PRESENTS

VAMPIRE THE BALL

A three day celebration of Vampires in the media, and shows such as **BUFFY, ANGEL** and **TRUE BLOOD**. This event will be taking place from 26-28 November 2010 at the Thistle Hotel Heathrow.

Guests appearing at the show include Juliet Landau and Clare Kramer, who portrayed Drusilla and Glory on BUFFY; Christian Kane and Julie Benz, who played Lindsey and Daria on ANGEL; and Allan Hyde and Marianna Klaveno who appeared in TRUE BLOOD as Godric and Lorena.

ACTIVITIES AT THE EVENT INCLUDE

- Opening and Closing festivities
- Question and answer sessions with the guests
- Opportunities for photos and autographs with the stars
- Competitions held throughout the weekend
- Make up demonstrations
- The Vampire Ball and other parties throughout the weekend

Tickets are priced at £88:50 for Regular and £135 for Gold, and give access for all three days, and can be ordered by calling **07930 319 119**

For further information, please visit our website at: **http://www.starfury.co.uk**

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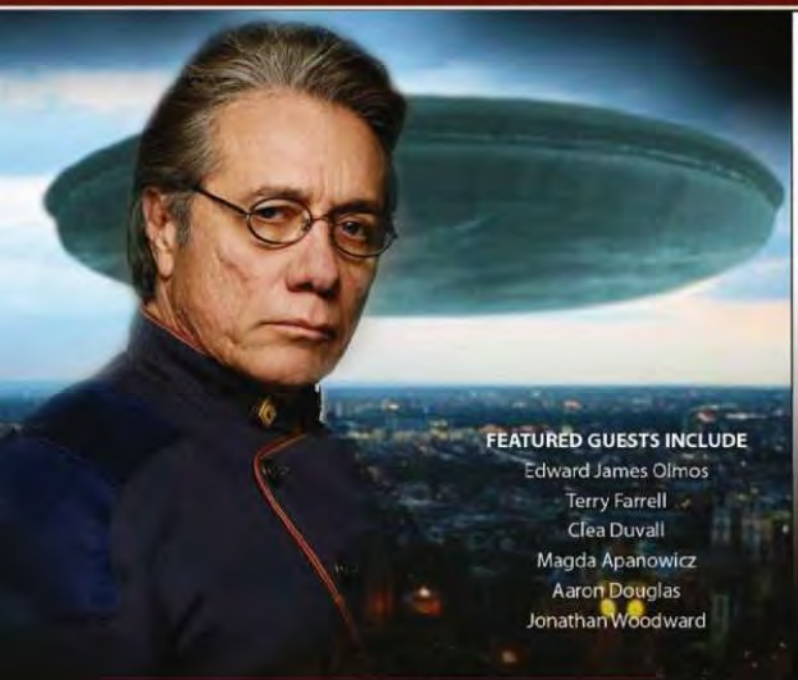

FEATURED GUESTS INCLUDE
Edward James Olmos
Terry Farrell
Clea Duvall
Magda Apanowicz
Aaron Douglas
Jonathan Woodward

STARFURY INVASION

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MAY 6-8, 2011 **RADISSON EDWARDIAN HEATHROW**

APRIL 1-3, 2011

ECHO-2

THE WORLDS SECOND DOLLHOUSE CONVENTION

FEATURING AMY ACKER AND FRAN KRANZ

ASK THE SFXPERTS

If you can't remember it, we can! Your sci-fi problems solved...

Journey To The Far Side Of The Sun – that'll be Shadwell, then.

© The Kobal Collection

TOWER POWER

I have hazy memories from my childhood (we're talking late-'70s/early-'80s here) about a TV show where some kids stayed in a spooky castle where they talked with an elderly ghost who spent all of his time sitting in bed. Pretty much the only thing I remember is that he wore an old-fashioned nightshirt and cap.

Ross Davison, St Ives

Rich says:

Unless I'm very much mistaken you're thinking of Dark Towers, *a story from BBC schools programme* Look And Read *(the one with annoying floating orange know-it-all Wordy). This particular story saw a girl called Tracey – "A loner. She thought boys were daft, and she thought girls were daft," according to the narrator – and her dog, Towser, stumbling on the titular stately home where they get involved in a quest to save the building's treasures from people with dubious motives. The spook you remember was "The Friendly Ghost", while the other principal member of the show's spirit line-up was the Tall Knight (played by Peter "Chewbacca" Mayhew). The show's best remembered, however, for its classic theme tune: "Come with me, yes come with me, to Dark Towers." tinyurl.com/sfxdto*

MOORE PUPPETS

I'm looking for the name of a movie where an astronaut leaves Earth, goes on a space flight, returns to Earth and finds everything to be a mirror image (with writing reversed, and so on). I thought it starred Roger Moore, and that this mirror planet's Roger Moore comes back to get him... but I might be getting mixed up with a different film.

Ian Woods, Oxfordshire

Ian says:

You are indeed, Ian. The Roger Moore movie you're thinking of is The Man Who Haunted Himself, *a 1970 thriller in which Moore's businessman finds a doppelganger taking over his life after he survives a car smash – cue raised eyebrow. But the storyline you describe is that of* Journey To The Far Side Of The Sun *(1969, also known as* Doppelganger*), in which a space mission to a planet on the other side of the sun discovers a backwards duplicate of our Earth. Its good cast includes Roy Thinnes and Ian Hendry. That was written by puppet-lord Gerry Anderson, and many of the props and costumes were recycled for his live-action TV series* UFO. *Both films are available on region two DVD.*

HIDDEN GENIUS

In the late 1980s or early 1990s I read a short story in a science fiction short story collection from the local library. It was about a young boy who everyone thought was dim until he surprised them all by building a machine out of junk which hovered in the air. I would like to read this story again, but can remember neither the author nor the title. Any ideas?

Kevin Gilholm, Reading

Dave Langford says:

The story is "The Available Data On The Worp Reaction" by Lion Miller, who doesn't seem to have written any other SF. It appeared in The Magazine Of Fantasy And SF, *September 1953, and is reprinted in a handful of anthologies:* Best SF 3 *(1958) ed Edmund Crispin,* 13 Great Stories Of Science Fiction *(1960) ed Groff Conklin,* Fifty Short Science Fiction Tales *(1963) ed Isaac Asimov & Groff Conklin,* Outwards From Earth *(1974) ed Edmund Crispin, and* Laughing Space *(1982) ed Isaac Asimov & J O Jeppson. Good hunting!*

YOU'RE THE SFXPERT

I enjoyed the Weekender enormously and chatting to the lovely lady on the subscription stand was a delight. When she found out I took out my subscription from issue 2, she kindly gave me a risqué figurine of a manga/anime blonde girl in a short skirt with black boots, stockings and suspenders. My wife now wants to know why I bought this particular item home from the show, so if you could tell me who it is, I might be able to get out of any further trouble...

Mike Poole, Bexhill

Guest SFXpert Mark Wilton:

Easy: this is Misa Amane from the *Death Note* franchise. The series centres on Light Yagami, a student who finds a note book – left on Earth by a god of death – with the power to kill anyone whose name is written inside. Light makes it his mission to kill criminals, under the name of Kira. Later Misa Amane, a Japanese celebrity, is obsessed with Kira and tracks him down, falling in love with Light. As Light's opposite number (a detective called L) gets closer to the truth, Light convinces Misa to become a second Kira in order to clear his name. *Death Note* manga, DVDs, films and toys are available everywhere.

See other reader questions at **tinyurl.com/SFXpertsTag**

Back off, Joss! We're not sure if you've the golden touch or not!

business today, but he's not exactly successful, is he? Cue the evidence: the original *Buffy* movie was a cult hit but not what you'd call a smash. Whedon then has his golden years with the massive *Buffy* TV series, Oscar nomination for the *Toy Story* script and a hit with the Angel spin-off series. But then *Alien: Resurrection*, which he wrote, barely managed to net double its budget, *Titan AE* (co-scripted by Whedon) was such a flop it brought down the studio, the *Firefly* TV series got cancelled halfway through its first season and the subsequent *Serenity* movie didn't even get back its meagre $39m budget at the cinema, while *Dollhouse* barely scraped a second season.

Can we therefore assume that *The Avengers* will be brilliant, sophisticated, witty and a big flop?

Dave Barsby, email

So is Joss a busted flush with a modicum of success way behind him? Let's ask him! Catch our in-depth interview with the man himself in the* SFX *Joss Whedon Special, on a newsagent's shelf near you from 30 September!

BOW TIES ARE COOL

Re: We Love SF, issue 197. The picture of Godzilla in a jacket and bow tie was taken during a short stint fronting his Saturday night chat show *Godzilla And Friends* (1978-79).

Famous guests included King Kong, the Gorgon and the Kraken. Godzilla even bantered with Mohammed Ali and Meg Ryan, although not entirely successfully. However, the show was abruptly cancelled after the host, live on air, incinerated Emu with his nuclear breath, before smashing up the set, the staircase, Ronnie Hazlehurst's orchestra and the screaming, one-armed remains of Rod Hull. Since then, Godzilla has steered clear of television, preferring to focus on films and voiceover work.

David Agnew's window cleaner, email

And didn't he also pop up* Celebrity Come Dine With Me? *Blood everywhere. Top episode.

WRITE TO: SFXPERTS, SFX, FUTURE PUBLISHING, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH BA1 2BW. EMAIL: SFXPERTS@FUTURENET.CO.UK

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science fiction and fantasy

YOUR MOVIES
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THE BOOGEYMAN
www.myspace.com/gerard_lough

The Boogeyman is a 27-minute, short film directed by Irish filmmaker Gerard Lough and based on a spooky short story by horror master Stephen King.

When Andrew Billings goes to see a psychologist to explain how an evil creature that lives in his closet is responsible for the deaths of his three children, he is met with scepticism. But as the story progresses Dr Harper starts to consider the possibility that the Boogeyman might just be real after all.

Featuring surprisingly decent low budget effects, creepy make-up by one of the best artists in Ireland as well as intricate camera work, *The Boogeyman* is a cut above most fan flicks. This combined with a faithful adaptation of King's much-loved source material, strong performances, and a sinister electronic score make for a very memorable 27 minutes, which will be shown at film festivals around the world.

Want us to plug your movie? Tell us about it via our email address: sfx@futurenet.co.uk.

CON MEN COMMENDED

Thanks for your excellent coverage of the San Diego Comic-Con. There were so many funny moments in the videos: Dave G being totally flummoxed by Red Fraggle, Will being heckled about his interview technique by Jonathan Ross and Proper Dave stealing Rich's thunder with the Avengers cast line up info. All brilliant stuff.

Next time, if you need anyone to carry bags, open doors for you or just be a general dogsbody I'm available at a very cheap rate, just so you know...

Steven Ellis, Humming the *X-Files* theme in the dairy isle in Tesco

Careful, they'll also get you to hand-clean their Con t-shirts, which get very sweaty after a hard day's work.

A real muppet. And Dave Golder.

Wossy and *Turf* artist Tommy Lee Edwards at Comic-Con.

SFX LAUGHS AT STARVING KIDS

Re: issue 197, The 100 Writers Who Shaped Science Fiction. In the otherwise excellent synopses, there's a reference in the one about Harry Harrison that is blatantly wrong. You describe Make Room! Make Room! as "a genuinely funny story". I think you probably meant *The Stainless Steel Rat*. Even in politically incorrect *SFX* (and how I like it to be so), considering a novel about overpopulation, famine and pollution as funny is a step too far...

Gaspar Garcao, email

Fair point, my little swarthy friend.

DUTCH DISMAY

Here in the Netherlands all the SF shows are on the commercial stations and they are treated most badly. They drop shows before they are cancelled and then buy shows that are already cancelled. We never saw the final season of *Angel*, never saw the end of *Farscape*, only saw *Smallville* as far as Jonathan's death and – I kid you not – we only saw half of *Battlestar Galactica*! "Back in the autumn", they said halfway through season two and this was almost two years ago; never heard of it since. Instead they want us to watch *Invasion* and, lately, *FlashForward*.

Rik Laan, Zwaagdijk, Netherlands

All this and a pathologically violent national football team! You want to move country, pal.

MEL'S FAN WRITES

Mad Max without Mel Gibson? What kind of apocalyptic nightmare is this? Not so long ago, *Fury Road* was all set to roll with Gibson in front of the camera. I am struggling to see any sense in George Miller's decision to recast Max Rockatansky.

It's not like recasting James Bond – this is a man who lost his wife and child, who saved a community from the Humungus, who battled Master-Blaster in the Thunderdome! All this was brought to stark life by Mel Gibson, and to have anyone else in the role will remove all emotional resonance of Max's past. Without Gibson on

It's raining superpowers, hallelujah!

NELSON'S COLUMN
TV: RIP?

THE PERSONAL OPINION OF WRITER **JAYNE NELSON**

The other day I read an interesting article which posited the theory that TV channels are dead. The way we were brought up, with sharp, divided boundaries between shows airing on the BBC, ITV or Channel 4, is now going the way of the dodo. People are starting to look less at which *channel* a programme is broadcast on than at the show itself. Appointment TV – wherein you drop everything and settle down in front of the box at a set time – is a thing of the past. Audiences these days tend to SkyPlus their shows, or watch them on iPlayer, 4OD or iTunes, or simply download them from the internet in other formats.

All of which means that TV channels are going to have to do a lot of thinking about their futures. After all, what does it matter if the BBC spends several million on a new ident featuring hippos swimming in a circle if nobody sees it? We skim past that and go straight to the show's opening credits now. American TV's endless ad breaks in stupid places are non-existent when someone downloads their shows illegally, so how do they get back all that lost revenue? And when it comes to getting audiences to try out new shows... if they're not bothering to watch the trailers you've slotted into these ad and programme breaks, how are they even supposed to know about them?

I can't speak for you guys, but these days I know next to nothing about what's coming up on UK TV – for me it's all word-of-mouth. I missed *Misfits* on Channel 4 because I didn't even know it existed, so I caught up with it on DVD after hearing all the praise. I would've missed *Sherlock* entirely if someone hadn't nagged me to watch it beforehand (thanks, Nick!). Hell, I wouldn't even have known a show as huge as *Big Brother* was back this year if I hadn't seen it trending on Twitter. Not that I watched it, I hasten to add...

I don't browse TV channels aimlessly searching for something to watch any more. I sit down fully aware that I have two episodes of *Fringe* saved on a hard drive and *that's* what I watch. This seems like extreme behaviour, true, but it's growing more common. People older than us might still flick happily between *Corrie* and that documentary on BBC2, but there's a whole new generation out there who'll hunt them down on the internet and watch them when they fancy it, not when the channels decide to air them. And there's an even younger generation behind them who will do exactly the same.

The article I read is right: the TV channel is dead. It's *what* you show that counts, and the choice you give your audience about how to watch it, not the name of the network showing it. One day we may well be asking, "BBC who?"

Danny Dyer: actually very nice to ladies.

board, the man Max should be left out of it, leaving the legend Max to permeate the whole film, his adventures having become fables passed on to the children of the new society.

Simon Hood, Rayleigh

Yes, I can't imagine why the misogynistic, violent, anti-semitic drunkard oaf is now being shunned by some people in Hollywood.

DYER ARTICLE

Sneaky, *SFX*. Sitting down to enjoy issue 199 I found myself reading an article about an upcoming movie. It became obvious pretty quickly that something was horribly wrong. It was a favourable article about a movie starring Danny Dyer... DANNY DYER! I rubbed my eyes and pinched my arm before returning my attention to the page. It was still there. Then my eyes scanned up to the top of the page. I breathed a huge sigh of relief upon seeing the word "promotion". This ad was clearly trying to disguise itself as an *SFX* feature. I know these run sometimes, but this is the first that fooled me. For a moment I doubted the integrity of your esteemed publication. Further to this, I also wasted three minutes of my precious time. I am hereby applying for a refund of that time. Here are some things I could do with that three minutes:

- cook an egg
- read a proper article
- rant to a bemused non SF-inclined friend about how *Firefly* should never have been cancelled
- write a sarky email

John Cook, Newcastle upon Tyne

Yeah, but it didn't stop our reviewer giving it one and a half stars last issue. PS: I always find three minutes is never quite enough for an egg how I like it.

BEST LETTER EVER

Could you please tell me about a movie called *Nemesis 2 Nebula*. I'd look on the internet but sadly I don't have one.

Anon

The most brilliant part of this hand-scrawled missive on a tiny piece of lined paper was the reference to the internet as "one". Anon, we love you, and we would help but our internet has gone and broke.

READER ADS

IT USED TO BE CALLED SALES OF THE UNCANNY. AND THEN AD INFINITUM. NOW IT'S JUST YOUR IRREGULAR "BUY/SELL/SWAP" COLUMN!

FOR SALE

Hard to find, deleted and rare VHS from the vaults of hell! Ranging from naked ninjas to killer robots to video nasties – plenty of mad men and psycho killers [*just like the SFX office, then – SFX*]. Over 2,000 of the buggers. Send your wish list to **sasa@m64t.fsnet.co.uk** or text me on **07796248868**.

Sci-fi, horror and monster film mags. USA imports – recent and back issues. For a list send an SAE to **Melvin Green, 8 Castlefield Avenue, Salford M7 4GQ**.

X-Files videos for sale. Seasons 1-8 limited edition VHS [*seriously, does anybody in the world still have their VHS player in front of their telly? – SFX*]. £5 per box or £30 for the lot. Individual VHS limited first editions of ten episodes including "Patient X", "The End" and "Requiem". Fight The Future Special limited first edition VHS and other assorted stories. All excellent condition, £2 each, full list on request. Selection of official and unofficial companions, novels and comics too, all in outstanding condition. Titles and prices on request. Please contact **natalie.tatum@gmail.com**.

WANTED

Does anyone have a spare copy of the following *Doctor Who* audio adventures CD please? "Pest Control" part two and "Resurrection Casket" part one? Thanks. Contact Nick Davison on **n.a.p.davison@gre.ac.uk**.

I'm after back issues of *Fangoria* magazine from issue 282 till the latest copy. Please text me on **07796248868** or email **sasa@m64t.fsnet.co.uk** [*hang on, it's you again, the one trying to flog video nasties! – SFX*]

Want to give a shout out to fellow SFX readers? Drop a line with all the relevant details to SFX.ReaderAds@futurenet.com.

WAHF

WE ALSO HEARD FROM

Dave Smith (wanting *Quantum Leap* back, *Tron Legacy*-style); **John Boddington** (reminiscing about animal attack movies – and incredulous that our feature didn't mention ant movie *The Naked Jungle*); **Mark Whitehead** (reminiscing about meeting Jayne Nelson and rediscovering *Transformers* fandom); **David Kennedy** (adamant that bow ties *aren't* cool); **Alison Johnston** (all sorts of good points about 3D films in the cinema); **Chris Thorpe** (sharing his earliest memory of *SFX* with us, and him putting *Batman Forever* on in his drama class); **Mauricio Muniz** (offering suggestions as to what those eight extra minutes of the re-released *Avatar* should contain); **Craig Waterworth** (not keen on the new Silurians or the new Daleks); **Kevin Hall** (loving Matt Smith's *Who* but wanting it up on the big screen); **Simon Hood** (getting over the fact that Del Toro's no longer involved in *The Hobbit*); **Martin Richmond** (requesting an article on 1970 fantasy *The Phantom Tolbooth* – probably not just yet, Martin); **Ben Dadds** (who writes "*SFX* is nothing short of spectacular when it comes to finding out information you didn't know you wanted" – but we're just sticking you in the WAHF box!); **Paul Gosden** (sending us what looked suspiciously like an ad for the play *Ghost Stories* at London's Duke of York theatre – doh!); **Beverley Stabler** (a long-time reader who never picked up issue one – "See what happens when you put *Tank Girl* on the cover!"); **Frances Cook** (oops, sorry for using your letter with someone else's name!); **Verity Hayter** (nearly beat a friend to death with her *Firefly* box set); **John Bleakley** (remembering the hotness of Susan Penhaligon); **Lucy Waterson** (excited about the next *Primeval* series); **Gavin Dickinson** (musing about *Smallville*); **Nic Chilton** (something about Easter Eggs); and many, many more.

SFX

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"Why are you pointing at my crotch?"

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Buffy The Vampire Slayer

WIN! 15 sets of the first two *Buffy* novel collections and a complete DVD box set for the taking

Win! Compo opens 22 September and closes 19 October

Buffy's adventures on the small screen may have come to a rousing climax way back in 2003 (where does the time go?), but it seems you can't keep a good Slayer down. Sunnydale's finest has had a remarkably fruitful afterlife in the years since, with the season eight comics books approaching the end of their four-year run and season nine still to come.

If your *Buffy* obsession only stretches to the chosen one's TV tales or – shudder – the movie, then you're missing out, because there are enough new novelised stories already in the wild to fill an entire section in your local bookshop, and the best are being repackaged and re-released in three collections, complete with bloody stunning new artwork.

Courtesy of Simon & Schuster, we have 15 copies of the first two collections to give away, featuring three barnstorming stories set during the first two seasons of the show (so you won't have missed anything even if you've never seen an episode). One lucky winner will also receive the complete *Buffy* collection on DVD. To be in with a chance of winning, just answer this simple question and text the correct answer code to us on 87474, or enter online at www.sfx.co.uk, where you'd be wise to check out the full terms and conditions. Safe hunting!

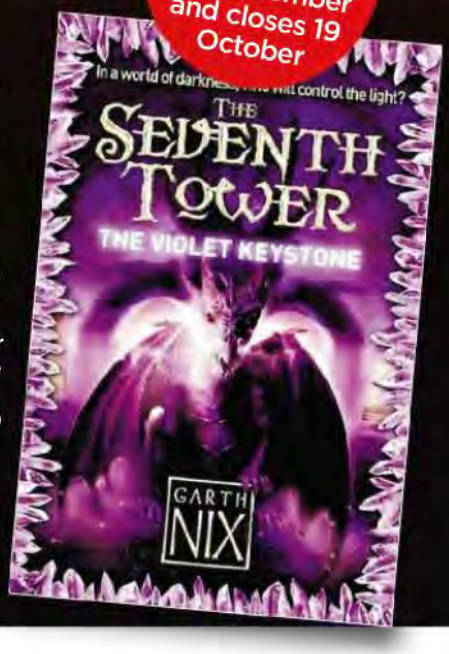
Question: What's the name of the Big Bad who terrorised Buffy throughout season one?

A The Destroyer (text SFXBUFFY A to 87474)
B The Doom Lord (text SFXBUFFY B to 87474)
C The Master (text SFXBUFFY C to 87474)

The Seventh Tower Series: The Violet Keystone

WIN! Five signed copies of Garth Nix's entire six-volume *Seventh Tower* series up for grabs

Win! Compo opens 22 September and closes 19 October



There's something to be said for long-running book series. Whereas the law of diminishing returns usually applies when it comes to movies, particularly when you get to the sixth instalment (*Freddy's Dead* or *Jason Lives*, anyone?), novels just seem to get better and better as the pages pile up.

Perhaps it's because novels don't feel the need to try to draw in new readers quite so much as movies chasing viewers for that opening weekend dollar. Whatever the case, Garth Nix's *The Seventh Tower* series is a prime example of long-form fantasy storytelling for a young adult audience at its very best, and it comes to a conclusion this year with the sixth and final chapter: *The Violet Keystone*.

Set in the Dark World, where all sunlight is blocked by a magical veil, the tale follows young heroes Tal and Milla as they embark upon an epic journey to rid the land of evil. But first, they have to climb to the highest levels of the Seventh Tower.

By the time you read this, the final instalment will already be out, but we've gone one better than the shops because we're offering five lucky readers the chance to win signed, collectable copies of all six books (not for thumbing through, hopefully!). To enter, all you have to do is answer the following tricksy question. Text the correct answer code to us on 87474, or head to www.sfx.co.uk, where you can also read the full terms and conditions.

Question: Garth Nix also pens another ongoing young adult fantasy series. What's it called?

A *The Keys To The Kingdom* (text SFXGARTHNIX A to 87474)
B *The Hyrule Chronicles* (text SFXGARTHNIX B to 87474)
C *The Shadow Traveller* (text SFXGARTHNIX C to 87474)

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SPIDER-MAN REBOOT

IT'S THE BIT WHERE WE ILLUSTRATE WHAT YOU WANT TO SEE IN FUTURE SCI-FI... THIS MONTH: THE NEXT BIG-SCREEN INCARNATION OF SPIDER-MAN

WISECRACKING

1 Dodgy Emo phase aside, Sam Raimi and Toby Maguire did a superb job of bringing Peter Parker to life on the big screen, but one significant character trait from the comics the dynamic duo never quite nailed was Spidey's penchant for a witty one-liner, and that's the first thing you'd like to see corrected in Marc Webb's reboot. Forum-ite vonbloodbath makes that very point: "Spidey cracking wise. It's one thing Raimi never quite got right, IMO." KickAssMarry makes the same request, but adds, "More humour! In the comics Spidey is such a wisecracker."

SWING INTO ACTION

2 Everyone knows ol' web head's origin story – bitten by a radioactive/genetically mutated spider, Uncle Ben pops it, he makes a silly costume etc. So unsurprisingly you don't want to see Webb and new Spidey Andrew Garfield going through the motions yet again, at least not at length anyway. Forum-user Veela Magnet puts it well: "Retell the Uncle Ben story if you have to, but either do it quick/in the opening credits, à la *The Incredible Hulk*, or have him survive to a turning point in the film, after Spidey has already been established. We've seen so many iterations of the back-story, either wrap it up quick or do something a bit fresh." reddergirl4 is on hand with backup, "I agree with Veela Magnet, have Uncle Ben's death/Peter's revenge quick and/or in the opening. Concentrate on the main story."

THE GIRL NEXT DOOR

3 Another aspect of the comics where you felt Raimi dropped the ball was red-headed raven Mary Jane. Dave C's harsh words sum up the general feeling over on the forum. "I'd like his girlfriend to at least be likeable. MJ must have been the most self-absorbed person in New York. I was urging Peter to dump her and find happiness with either Gwen or the girl from his lodgings." Seems FREEFALL can't see the appeal of a perma-scowl girlfriend either. "Mary Jane has to be nice. She can't be the sort of girl that makes people wonder 'why the hell are they together?'" How about Karen Gillan in the role?

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VILLAIN

4 Spidey has a formidable rogues' gallery, so it's no surprise you want to see Webb breaking new ground with his reboot. "Do we really need to see Green Goblin, Doc Ock, Sandman & Venom again?" says Midnighter. "Surely Spidey has a large enough villains' gallery to negate the need to re-use villains from the Raimi trilogy." The Black Cat, Kraven the Hunter, the Vulture, Electro, Kingpin, the Sinister Six, the Chameleon and the Lizard all got a mention, but Dr Manhattan makes a suggestion we hope he's just joking about: "I would like to see a new villain in *Spidey 4*. Perhaps Rhino played by Vinnie Jones." I'm the Rhino, bitch.

JK SIMMONS TO RETURN

5 The rest of the cast may have been given the chop but there's one person you'd like to see return, reboot be damned, and that's JK Simmons – who pulled off the angriest man in comics (and we include the Hulk) with such cigar-chomping perfection we can't picture anyone else in the role. whc_dude200 makes a good point: "If they can still use Judi Dench in the rebooted Bond movies then surely JK can come back as JJ." One worrying thought occurs: what if they make Jameson editor of a *student* paper?

ARE YOU LISTENING?

Get the web out your ears, Hollywood!

Keep JK Simmons as Jameson, or do something really different with the character.
Craig Oxbrow

Bring back Maguire and Raimi or don't bother at all. Have another go at Venom, but do it, like, not crap this time.
Kudos

I like the idea of the "Back To School" reboot. I would like to see it handled like *Ultimate Spider Man*, where he joins a sports team and gets accepted, but has to pull back in fear of losing his secret identity. I want schoolboy problems, not grown-up ones.
emceehamster

No self-absorbed redheads please and no frickin' dance routines! That is all.
Vegeeta-san

I'm just so damned disappointed that they've gone down the "teen high school route". I hope to sweet Christ this isn't going to turn into *High School Musical Spider-Man*. Alternatively get the Punisher in, always a good move ;-)
Frank Castle

John Malkovich as the Vulture perhaps? One of things I really liked about the Raimi movies was the camerawork involved in the web-swinging. And having the Vulture as the bad guy gives you a chance to do some amazing-looking aerial fight scenes.
weirdsoup

No high school, teenage drama, *Skins/The Hills*-esque setting. Stay as far away from *Brand New Day* as possible. And stay away from *The Ultimate* universe for that matter. Get the feeling I'm going to miss Sam Raimi.
RoyaleFlush

And I was hoping for Karen Gillan and the cast of *Glee*.
Mr.Lavigne

I think Spidey should adopt a more passive aggressive approach to fighting bad guys. His main weapon of deployment should be the "solitary-thread-of-webbing-across-the-face of irritation".
tameblue

I think the guy playing Spidey will be about 30 *(he'll actually be just 27 – SFX)* when the film is released, so, if it's set in high school, he'd have to be the janitor or something. So make a Spider-Janitor film, where Peter Parker uses his powers to climb walls and clean the guttering.
Donnie Darko

Here's hoping that it's only Spidey/Parker that's a teenager and they don't go down the teen villain route as well. The majority of Spidey villains are older than him, keep it that way.
kahless

Have Spidey be the figure of hate he was in the books, thanks to the *Daily Bugle*. Show him interacting with the public to illustrate this, but on a rare occasion have him bump into a fan. Those moments of gratitude were all the more sweet in the books due to the overwhelming mistrust he faced.
david icke

Make Peter's intelligence useful. Whenever a scientific problem came up, he depended on Connors or Doc Ock to tell him what to do about it. Show that Peter can solve a problem by THINKING and not just punching.
Fricky

I wish after that web video that Wes Anderson suddenly realises he wants to make a Spider-Man film!
deGooder

Would love to see Venom back but in a proper dark storyline. Maybe use the Separation Anxiety storyline woven into Spidey's world. And no more than one villain at a time please!
KevTheLostDoctor

Thread in the Kingpin, build up to the Sinister Six, make light of the fact that between movies Spidey fights other villains (we recall the line from *Spider-Man 3* "Were do these guys come from?") and all that good stuff, so we can avoid them having to pull villains and stories out of their asses in the next few films.
Lysander45

COMING SOON: RISE OF THE APES AND AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS

We still want to hear what you'd like to see in *Rise Of The Apes*. Now Guillermo Del Toro's dream has come true, what would be in your version of HP Lovecraft's *At The Mountains Of Madness*?

Find out about our current Wishlist request and how to send in your suggestions by visiting http://tinyurl.com/sfxmagwishlist

Illustration by Paul Garner

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Camber Sands

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the celebrated Discworld author

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THE SFX WEEKENDER 2

CAMBER SANDS, 3-5 FEBRUARY 2011

Top comic talent joining us at our big sci-fi event

Get this – wouldn't it be great if there was a place, a fantastical place where you could watch stilt-walking, flame-twirling cyber women strut their stuff one minute and the next head into another room to find the galaxy's leading lights from the worlds of comics, novels, film and TV offering insights into their life and works? And all in the company of like-minded sci-fi, fantasy and horror enthusiasts.

Comics legends Pat Mills (above) and Mike Carey.

Nope, you haven't died and ascended to geek nirvana, we're talking about the *SFX* Weekender, which returns in 2011!

You've heard about some of the big-name guests already announced that will be joining us in Camber Sands – including George Takei, Terry Pratchett and Craig Charles – so today we're going to fill you in on some of the things you'll be getting up to next February and reveal the top comic talent that will be joining us. First up: Pat Mills, the godfather of British comics and the mastermind responsible for 23 years of *2000 AD* will be there, as will Mike Carey who's written for the likes of *Hellblazer* and *X-Men* during his near twenty-year career.

For those who couldn't join us last year (or those with the memory spans of microscopic plankton) the *SFX* Weekender is structured around four huge pillar events: the enchanting Imaginarium cabaret, the sweeping Maskerade party, the fiendish Blastermind quiz and the epic *SFX* Sci-Fi Awards Show 2011, where celebrity host Robert Rankin will be handing out our coveted Golden Rayguns to the universe's best and brightest (see page 100).

If you were taking part in the quiz and missed the Imaginarium in 2010 then this is a second chance to lay witness to the sights that left many a reader speechless. And with five months still to plan, we're expecting the best gorram costumes the galaxy has ever seen at this year's Maskerade ball. Dave Lister will be on the decks and we don't want to let him down now, do we?

Make space in the Moleskine now – the *SFX* Weekender 2 takes place at Camber Sands holiday camp in East Sussex on Friday 4 February and Saturday 5 February 2011, with our pre-party on Thursday 3 February for the early birds. VIP tickets are already sold out, and tickets for the pre-party are going fast, but there are still other options available. Make sure you get yours before it's too late! Book now by calling 08700 110034, or head to www.sfxweekender.com/tickets for more information.

Carey's X-Men. The X-Men probably won't be at the Weekender, sadly.

We'll let you be the Judge of the *SFX* Weekender...

More at ebook-free-download.net or magazinesdownload.com

Happy talk: Kristin Bauer.

Checking in: Sam Trammell.

CON REPORT

BITTEN

NORTHAMPTON, 5-7 AUGUST 2010

NARIN BAHAR TAKES A BITE OUT THE UK'S INTIMATE *TRUE BLOOD* CONVENTION

Four cast members of *True Blood* swapped Bon Temps for, erm, Northampton at Bitten, a weekend devoted to the much-loved show. Sam Trammell (Sam), Kristin Bauer (Pam), Jim Parrack (Hoyt) and Todd Lowe (Terry) mingled with fans during autograph and photo sessions and Q&As – with the words "no season three spoilers" echoing frustratingly in everyone's ears. The guests also hung out at the parties that Massive Events are fast becoming famous for, with the Fangtasia-themed bash giving fans the mind-boggling sight of Parrack and Lowe taking a turn at poledancing as well as busting some moves on the dancefloor.

SFX forum regular and Bitten attendee Chris Slinn says, "The setting was informal which – paired with the relatively small size of the con – made for a really intimate event. It was fun to meet the actors; all of them were funny and had a lot to say in their guest talks. This was especially the case in the final talk where they answered questions about more general things, rather than specific *True Blood* questions. It gave a real chance to get a sense of the camaraderie between them and the people behind the characters."

He continues: "The highlight for me was probably the signings – it was a chance to meet the guests one to one."

While the event was small – holding around 300 punters – they were very dedicated fans indeed. Arguably any prize for *most* dedicated should go to the fans who followed the guests across the Atlantic for a chance to meet them in a less formal UK convention setting. One attendee paid £350 to go out for a Chinese meal with them!

Bitten 2 will take place in August 2011. For guest announcements and other information head over to **www.massiveevents.co.uk**.

UPCOMING

Dates, meet diary. Diary, meet dates.

Asylum 5
29-31 October
Spend Halloween with Mark Sheppard and other stars at this *Supernatural* convention in Birmingham.
www.rogueevent.co.uk/asylum5

Hallowhedon 2
29-31 October
Anthony Head and Alan Tudyk are among the guests confirmed for this Joss Whedon convention, being held in the vicinity of Heathrow.
www.massiveevents.co.uk/hallowhedon2

London MCM Expo
29-31 October
The UK's answer to San Diego Comic-Con is back at the ExCel Centre, where it's playing host to top comics awards The Eagles.
www.londonexpo.com

The Vampire Ball
26-28 November
Stars of *Buffy*, *Angel*, *True Blood* and more unite for this bloodsucker-themed bash held near Heathrow.
www.seanharry.com/vampire

Dimensions 2010
12-14 November
An unofficial *Doctor Who* convention in Newcastle Upon Tyne. Three Doctors are on the guest list.
tinyurl.com/sfxnewcastle

DON'T MISS IT!

UNCONVENTION 2010

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER
23-24 OCTOBER 2010

TWO WEIRDNESS-PACKED DAYS OF MUSIC, COMEDY AND DEBATE PIQUE THE CURIOSITY OF RACHEL STANIKK

As all enthusiasts of cryptozoology and parapsychology know, *Fortean Times* is the long-established magazine of strange phenomena and the UnConvention is the mag's annual get-together. The weekend will include talks and discussion, as well as music and comedy plus the chance to get stuck in with experiments and workshops. So far 20 speakers have been confirmed, including *Who* writer Paul Cornell, author Jan Bondeson and comedian Helen Keen. As well as strange and wonderful subjects ranging from "sexual hauntings" to The Blue Dogs of Texas there will also be heaps of shopping opportunities with a range of dealers – and according to the organisers, a few surprises too. For more info visit www.forteantimes.com/events/uncon2010.

DON'T MISS IT!

WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION 36

COLUMBUS, OHIO
28–31 OCTOBER 2010

THE ANNUAL FANTASY CONVENTION (AND AWARDS) GET READY FOR THE CROWDS, REPORTS RACHEL STANIKK

The World Fantasy Convention is back for its 36th year and as usual it includes the 2010 World Fantasy Award ceremony, which will take place on Sunday 31 following a banquet. The guests of honour for 2010 are fantasy and SF writers Dennis McKiernan and Esther Friesner, fantasy and SF editor David Hartwell and illustrator Darrell K Sweet. A perennially popular area of the convention is the dealers' room; there can sometimes be up to 50 tables of merchandise, and since there's a jury process in place to select which dealers can host tables inside, the quality is typically high. The theme this year is "the whimsical side of fantasy" – for more information, visit www.contextsf.org/WFC.

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28 DAYS LATER

22 SEPT-20 OCT 2010

As the Sun deserts the northern hemisphere, large quantities of science fiction return to your telly

22 SEP WEDNESDAY

SFX ON SALE NOW!

» *SFX* enters its third century with issue 201.
» Celebrate by going to watch Joe Dante's *The Hole*.
» Get your weekly *Ghost Whisperer* fix on Living.

23 SEP THURSDAY

» It's like *The X-Files* but quirky! The second season of *Warehouse 13* gets underway on Syfy.
» *Vampyre Labyrinth: Redeye*, the first in a kids' series from GP Taylor, hits bookshops today.
» Happy birthday to *Babylon 5* posh bloke Jason Carter and Chi McBride from *Pushing Daisies*.

24 SEP FRIDAY

» A new movie from the director of *Irreversible*? *Enter The Void* is unlikely to be one for the whole family.
» *Batman: The Brave And The Bold* comes to Wii and DS, and *Dead Rising 2*, er, rises on PS3 and Xbox 360.
» We foresee that *Medium* will be on Living.
» Admire top movie posters in *The Art Of Drew Struzan*.

25 SEP SATURDAY

» Darth Vader, Boba Fett, R2-D2 and Chewbacca come to Swansea for two days of Starmania 2010. **tinyurl.com/sfxsman**
» *Merlin*'s still trying to keep the magic secret over on BBC One.
» Many happy returns of the day to Mark Hamill. The real question is, has Darth Vader felt his presents?

Saturday nights are magic on BBC One.

Head back in time 25 years this month...

26 SEP SUNDAY

» It's birthday time for Linda "Sarah Connor" Hamilton and James "Number Six" Caviezel.

27 SEP MONDAY

» If you've been waiting to catch up on last season's US shows, the deluge of box sets kicks off with *Fringe* season two and the whole of *FlashForward*. You can also get *Space Chimps 2*, the Dario Argento-scripted *Demons*, and *Bionic Ever After* and *Bionic Showdown*.
» Catch *Chuck* on Channel One (formerly Virgin 1).

28 SEP TUESDAY

» Get a Tuesday TV fix with *Smallville* on E4 and *Eureka* on Syfy.

29 SEP WEDNESDAY

» Stephen King and Scott Snyder's *American Vampire* volume one hits shops.
» Today's birthday boys are *Pirates Of The Caribbean* (and *Demons*) star Mackenzie Crook, Chuck himself, Zachary Levi, and Guillermo del Toro's favourite member of Bros, Luke Goss.

30 SEP THURSDAY

» He made *Buffy*, *Angel*, *Firefly* and *Dollhouse* in the hope that this day may eventually come: the *SFX* Joss Whedon special edition goes on sale today.
» Bury your nose in John Ajvide Lindqvist's *Harbour*, Hannu Rajaniemi's *The Quantum Thief* and *The Brilliant Book Of Doctor Who 2011*.

03 OCT SUNDAY

» *Fringe*, one of the best shows on US TV, returns to Sky1 for its third season.
» Many happy returns to *the other* Sarah Connor, Lena Headey.

04 OCT MONDAY

» There's more US TV on DVD, with *Heroes* season four, *Smallville* season nine and *Sanctuary* season two. You can also nab *Fanboys*, *Doctor Who: Revisitation Collection Volume One* and the icky *Human Centipede*.
» Check out *Odd And The Frost Giants*, a new Neil Gaiman book expanding on his £1 World Book Day title.

05 OCT TUESDAY

» There's no getting away from the fact that the nights are getting shorter. Make the most of them by tuning into the new second season of *Stargate Universe* on Sky1. Meanwhile, *Eureka*'s on Syfy and *Smallville*'s on E4.
» Birthdays for Mrs Indiana Jones, Karen Allen, and Greaser turned *Babylon 5* security chief Jeff Conaway.

06 OCT WEDNESDAY

» London's Forbidden Planet pulls off quite a coup by inviting Guillermo del Toro for a signing. Say "hi" to one of the nicest guys in movies. **tinyurl.com/sfxgdt**
» Don't worry, there's only *Ghost Whisperer* on the box so you won't miss much.
» Many happy returns to former pink Power Ranger Amy Jo Johnson.

07 OCT THURSDAY

» *Warehouse 13* gets a new Thursday buddy on Syfy in Stephen King adap *Haven*.
» Iain M Banks signs his latest title, *Surface Detail*, at Forbidden Planet. It's out today. **tinyurl.com/sfximb**
» Other books include Robert Jackson Bennett's *The Company Man* and Haynes's *USS Enterprise Owners' Workshop* manual.

10 OCT SUNDAY

» Everyone knows that Sundays are best spent hopping between parallel universes, so tune your telly to *Fringe* on Sky1.
» Many happy returns to *Going Postal*'s Charles Dance and Adipose wrangler Sarah Lancashire.

11 OCT MONDAY

» *Dollhouse*'s second season and *Chuck*'s third fly the TV box set flag; *30 Days Of Night* sequel *Dark Days* does the same for straight-to-DVD movies; and Blu-ray is represented by *The Evil Dead*, *Space: 1999* series one and *Lost In Space*.

Is it just us, or is there an Echo in this room? Find out on 11 October.

12 OCT TUESDAY

» *Doctor Who Live* materialises in Sheffield.
» On the small screen it's time for *Stargate Universe* on Sky1, *Eureka* on Syfy and *Smallville* on E4.
» Some 30 years in the making, JW Rinzler's *The Making Of The Empire Strikes Back* hits shelves.
» It's Hugh Jackman's birthday! Snikt!

16 OCT SATURDAY

» This year's British International Comics Show comes to London for the weekend. Charles Vess, Bryan Hitch, Charlie Adlard and Dave Gibbons are among the guests. **tinyurl.com/sfxcom**
» It's a kind of magic, magic, magic! (That's our way of saying *Merlin*'s on BBC One.)

17 OCT SUNDAY

» *Fringe* continues to make Sundays bearable on Sky1.
» Former Lois Lane Margot Kidder and *League Of Gentlemen/Doctor Who* guy Mark Gatiss celebrate birthdays today.

18 OCT MONDAY

» Top tip for Time Lord spotters: the TARDIS is going to land in Birmingham for *Doctor Who Live*.
» With *V* season one and *Supernatural* season five, you can complete the set of last year's US TV on DVD.
» *Zombies Of Mass Destruction*, *Lost Boys* threequel *The Thirst* and *Black Death* are also out.

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Check out our weekly updates at www.sfx.co.uk Got an event? Email sfxevents@futurenet.co.uk

Image © Kobal Collection

Emily Rose and co find a *Haven* on SyFy from 7 October.

01 OCT FRIDAY

» Get your flux capacitor fluxing to catch *Back To The Future* on the big screen.
» If *Torchwood*'s more your thing, check out The Hub 5. **tinyurl.com/sfxhubv**
» Representing the world of new books are Tony DiTerlizzi's *The Search For WondLa* and Charles Yu's *How To Live Safely In A Science Fictional Universe*.

02 OCT SATURDAY

» Top fantasy artist (and father of the babe with the power in *Labyrinth*) Brian Froud goes to London's Forbidden Planet for a bit of signing action. **tinyurl.com/sfxfro**
» Whether or not you think Camelot is a silly place, you should hotfoot it to BBC One for *Merlin*.

08 OCT FRIDAY

» The *Doctor Who Live* tour gets underway in London. **tinyurl.com/sfxdwl**
» Celebrate the 50th anniversary of Alan Garner's *The Weirdstone Of Brisingamen* at a festival at Cheshire's Alderley Edge. **tinyurl.com/sfxbris**
» If you're more in the mood for a movie, check out *Jackboots In Whitehall*.

09 OCT SATURDAY

» Forbidden Planet's booking agent deserves a medal this month – today's guest at the London megastore is William Gibson. **tinyurl.com/sfxgib**
» BBC One becomes a place of magic once more with the return of *Merlin*.
» It's the loudest birthday of the year, as Brian Blessed celebrates his 74th.

13 OCT WEDNESDAY

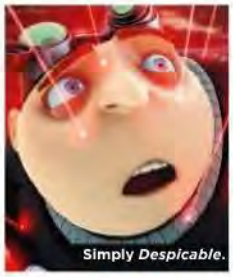
» *The Occult Files Of Doctor Spektor* volume one, reprints of '70s Gold Key comics about an occult detective, hits stores.
» Wonder what the Doc would make of *Ghost Whisperer* on Living.
» Many happy returns to *X-Files* creator Chris Carter and former *SG-1*-er Christopher Judge.

14 OCT THURSDAY

» *Warehouse 13* and *Haven* settle into a routine on Syfy.
» Al Ewing's *Zombo*, Eric Brown's *Engineman* and Stephen Jones's *Zombie Apocalypse!* go on sale.
» Glasgow welcomes *Doctor Who Live*.
» The Bram Stoker International Film Festival arrives to scare Whitby. **tinyurl.com/sfxbram**

15 OCT FRIDAY

» Do you like owls? Then you'll love new animated movie *Legend Of The Guardians*. If supervillains float your boat, try *Despicable Me*. (We're assuming you won't want to bother with bloodsucker spoof *Vampires Suck*.)
» Check out the Manchester Festival of Fantastic Films. **tinyurl.com/sfxman**



Simply *Despicable*.

19 OCT TUESDAY

» Eureka! It's *Eureka* on Syfy. Alas, "Smallville! It's *Smallville* on E4" doesn't work quite so well. (*Stargate Universe* is also on Sky1, but we didn't want to repeat a really lame gag.)
» It's Albus Dumbledore's birthday (well, Michael Gambon's), a celebration he shares with Jon Favreau and Philip Pullman.

Retro fashion is taken to its logical conclusion in *Eureka*.

20 OCT WEDNESDAY

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» The brand new *SFX* 202 beckons you into a brave new world of science fiction and fantasy.

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HIGHLIGHTS

NEW SEASON TV

Throughout the month

Autumn's rubbish in many ways (shorter days, colder weather, *The X Factor*), but there is one positive – the TV schedules are starting to repopulate with sci-fi and fantasy. Best of all, these days we don't have to wait months for shows like *Fringe* and *Stargate Universe* to make the trip over the Atlantic. Meanwhile, Syfy welcomes the second season of *Warehouse 13* and the first year of Stephen King adaptation *Haven*, and CBBC waves hello to the fourth series of *The Sarah Jane Adventures*. With *Smallville*, *Medium*, *Eureka*, *Chuck* and, er, *Ghost Whisperer* all continuing, there's really no reason to go out.

SFX JOSS WHEDON SPECIAL

Thursday 30 September

He's the most important creative force to emerge during *SFX*'s lifetime, so it's time we devoted an entire special edition to the legend that is Joss Whedon. In fact, we've created *two* Joss-themed mags in one glorious package – one loaded with exclusive features, the other a complete TV and movie guide. The main mag boasts an exclusive 14-page interview with the man himself, along with new interviews with 11 top Joss stars (including Nathan Fillion, Eliza Dushku and Anthony Head), and the writers who helped flesh out Joss's visions. As the crew of a certain Firefly-class ship were fond of saying: shiny.

DOCTOR WHO LIVE

From Friday 8 October

Normally, being within shooting distance of a Dalek or Cyberman would be cause for great concern, but not here. In a spirit of cooperation last seen in "The Pandorica Opens", the Doctor's top foes are uniting for *Doctor Who Live* – a stage show with pyrotechnics and live music (but little danger of extermination). While Matt Smith won't take to the stage (the Doctor will appear via video clips), it's been confirmed that former Young One Nigel Planer stars as Vorgenson, an "inter-galactic showman" and the Doctor's biggest fan. After *SFX*, of course. **www.doctorwholive.com**

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It doesn't happen very often, so when a sci-fi film gets an Oscar nomination for Best Film, we think it's something worth crowing about. So *District 9* might not have won a little golden statue of a man with no willy, but it was a spectacular effects-driven event picture, proving that blockbuster movies can have brain along with brawn!

Set in Johannesburg, it tells the story of what happens when thousands of ailing extraterrestrials come to live alongside local residents. Cue all sorts of problems when the "prawns" and humans clash.

But at least it's not as grim as the secenario in the second movie we're giving away: the end of the world as we know it! Yes, in Roland Emmerich's earth-shattering action movie, *2012*, cities collapse and continents crumble thanks to spectacular special effects, and plucky survivors John Cusack and Woody Harrelson battle on to try and live until 2013 (the year, not the time on the 24-hour clock).

If you choose to receive these two great films on Blu-ray you'll be able to appreciate the stunning high-def picture and sound, plus enjoy a whole host of great extras.

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SUBSCRIBE BEFORE THE WORLD ENDS!

"Got one of those newfangled Blu-ray players? Still using a prehistoric DVD machine? Doesn't matter! You're spoilt for choice this month, as we offer you both *2012* and *District 9* on your preferred format. Neill Blomkamp's *District 9* is a sci-fi thriller with apartheid parallels. It's adapted from Blomkamp's earlier short film *Alive In Joburg* and features a race of alien refugees under guard in a South African slum. The critically acclaimed film was produced for just $30 million – compare that to the estimated $200 million which Roland Emmerich blew on his flood movie *2012*. A widescreen disaster flick riffing on the Mayan calendar's apparent prediction of the end of days, it follows a group of people feeling their way to arks as our world's continents do the tango. Fancy getting your hands on these two 2009 blockbusters? Call the number on this page or visit the website to take up this Earth-shattering offer. And thanks for being an *SFX* subscriber!"

Dave Bradley
SFX Editor-in-Chief

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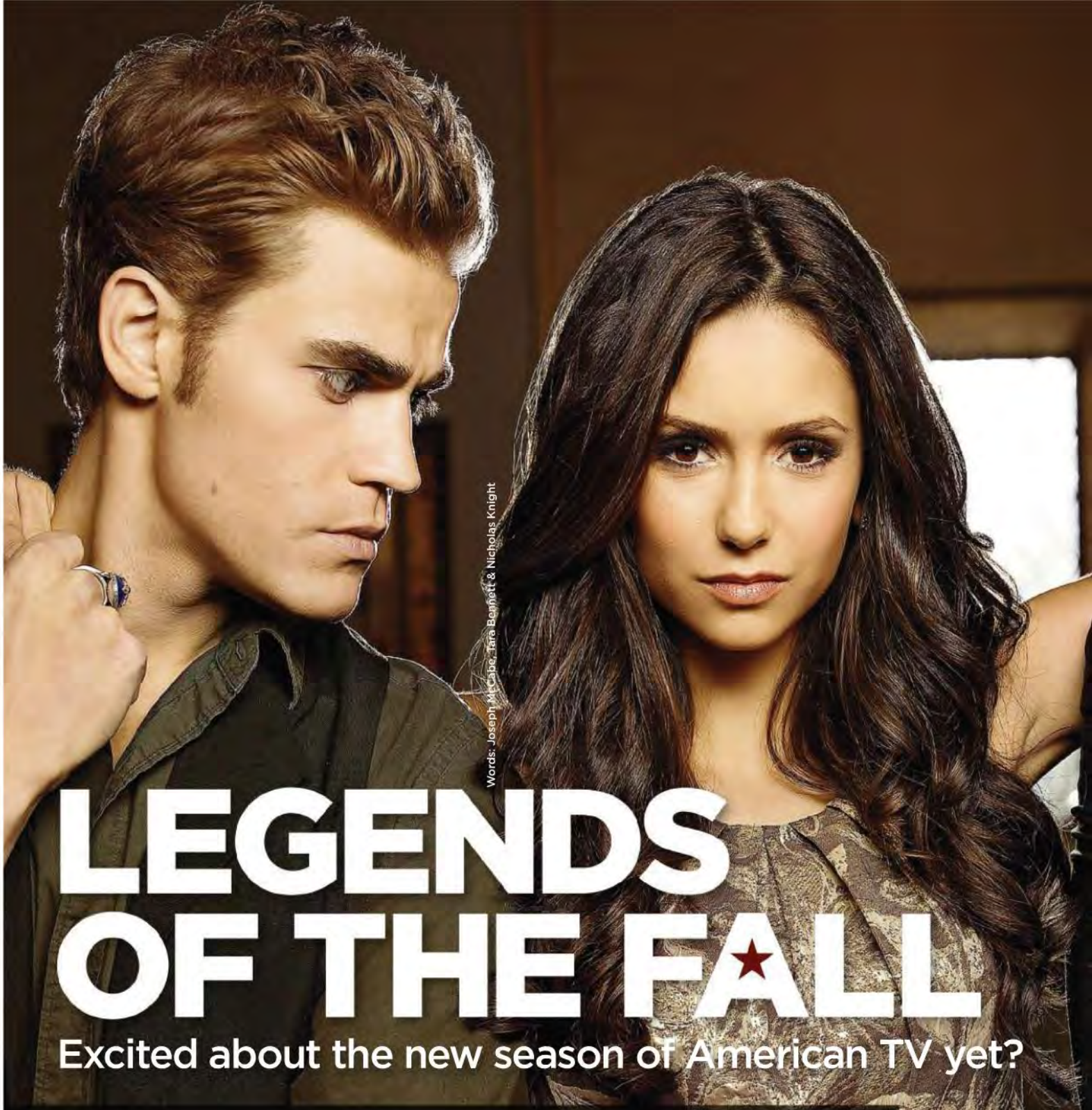

Words: Joseph McCabe, Tara Bennett & Nicholas Knight

LEGENDS OF THE FALL

Excited about the new season of American TV yet?

THE VAMPIRE DIARIES SEASON TWO

THE PREMISE: Lovely teen Elena falls in love with Stefan, a vampire determined to suppress his dark nature, and finds herself challenged by his brother Damon, who's determined to embrace it.
WHO'S IN IT: Nina Dobrev, Paul Wesley, Ian Somerhalder, Steven R McQueen
BURNING ISSUE: At season one's end, the Salvatore brothers' old love Katherine had returned. Will she cause Stefan to resume his once-wicked ways and prompt Damon to abandon his?

Q&A EXECUTIVE PRODUCER KEVIN WILLIAMSON

How do you feel about the success of *The Vampire Diaries*?
It could have gone three ways. It could have gone really well, like it did, or it could have gone really poorly, or it could have been right there, and dragged its way to a pickup. Luckily we struck a chord with viewers.

What will this second season bring?
I will say that we do go into 1864 in our fourth episode. That's our first flashback episode. We go back to the scene of the crime, as we call it, where we see when Katherine and Damon and Stefan had their relationship. We find out the next part of that story. I think all we showed was the two brothers' transition, and now we back up a little bit and show when Katherine first came to Mystic Falls, why she came. There's a whole other story there. They don't know half of it. They're not even aware of it, because they were just two innocent human beings who were turned into vampires and minioned by Katherine. Katherine was up to no good. So we'll watch what her part of the story was, and how she participated in that time.

Will we see a sympathetic side to her?
I don't think it's sympathetic, but I think we are going to understand her. We may not like her, we may not be sympathetic towards her reasons, but we will understand Katherine. We will understand what makes her tick and why she's home, why she's there, and why she wants Stefan.

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Three's definitely a crowd with this lot.

Dean's left holding the baby in the new season.

SUPERNATURAL SEASON SIX

THE PREMISE: Sam and Dean Winchester have been hunting supernatural creatures all their lives. They thought they'd be done with it once they averted the Apocalypse, but the flipping monsters just won't leave them alone.

WHO'S IN IT: Jensen Ackles, Jared Padalecki, Jim Beaver, Misha Collins, Mitch Pileggi, Cindy Sampson, Mark Sheppard

BURNING ISSUE: The last seconds of season five left fans wondering how Sam got out of Hell, but the burning question is: how long will Dean stay with Lisa and Ben before he resumes hunting monsters?

Q&A EXECUTIVE PRODUCER AND SHOW-RUNNER SERA GAMBLE

Post-Apocalypse, what problems are Sam and Dean up against?

Something pretty urgent comes up fairly soon for Sam and Dean. Beyond that there's an unfolding mystery. Hunters are baffled because monsters are going haywire and scarily off-pattern. Sam and Dean find themselves in the middle of monster cases that go awry with brutal consequences... and this seems to be part of a larger pattern.

What about Dean's relationship with Lisa?

We're not killing Lisa off... *immediately*. Dean lived with her in the year between seasons five and six, and that has repercussions for him when he resumes hunting. He doesn't see victims the same way after that.

How do angels fit into season six?

One of the guys calls Castiel repeatedly about something he needs help with, and when Castiel finally shows up, we find out that he has his hands full in Heaven. Archangels Michael and Lucifer are locked up in the basement, Gabriel is dead, leaving Raphael, who was pissed off to begin with. Castiel is torn between the massive work there is to be done in Heaven and his desire to help Sam and Dean. And we meet the angel Balthazar (Sebastian Roche), who provides a unique perspective on what is going on in Castiel's world. Balthazar is doing things we've never seen an angel doing before...

What season six teasers can you share exclusively with *SFX* readers?

You'll be seeing at least one of the Horsemen again. And you'll be seeing a creature called a skinwalker in an exceptionally creepy episode about monsters that hide in plain sight...

THE BUZZ

Vampires are hotter than ever, and *Vampire Diaries*' tale is even tighter than those of *Twilight* and *True Blood*. Season two should be an even greater smash than *VD*'s first hit season.

SFXCITEMENT FACTOR ★★★

THE BUZZ

The addition of Dean's wife and son and the introduction of some hunting cousins drives home the show's theme of the strength of family against unbelievable horrors.

SFXCITEMENT FACTOR ★★★★

NO ORDINARY FAMILY

SEASON ONE

THE PREMISE: The Powells, an average American family, receive superpowers after surviving a plane crash in South America. Dad's got super strength, Mom super speed, and their two teenagers super smarts and telepathy.
WHO'S IN IT: Michael Chiklis, Julie Benz, Kay Panabaker, Jimmy Bennett, Autumn Reeser, Stephen Collins
BURNING ISSUE: Can an ensemble superhero show survive in the wake of *Heroes*' ratings tumble and termination?

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER/ CREATOR JON HARMON FELDMAN

What attracted Michael Chiklis?
When we met with him before the pilot, we sort of talked about where this role would go. I think he was drawn to the fact that it could go anywhere. He could come to work and not know what he's going to do, which I think for any artist is a pretty exciting feeling, to have that unpredictability and challenge yourself in different ways every day. He can talk about this more eloquently about this than I can, but they're some of the things he talked about when he decided to take the role. *Fantastic Four*'s one of the great things he's done, but obviously he's done comedy, he's done drama, he's done all sorts of things. And when you write for an actor with that range, you just get the licence to explore all those colours.

When we said we wanted to pick the star's brains...

Are you aiming to create a family drama as an antidote to the many dark adult dramas out there?
I think it's always good to try to do something that's not as well-represented on TV. In a lot of key respects, this is different than a lot of stuff. I think it's trying to be real. I think there'll be some episodes that'll be a little darker and some that'll be a little lighter. But we're trying with every episode to have grounded emotion and humour and fun in addition to these great special effects.

Michael Chiklis is still super strong, just not bright orange.

THE BUZZ
With Chiklis and Benz, and former *Chuck* writer Allison Adler scripting alongside ex *Smallville* producers Darren Swinner and Todd Slavkin, *No Ordinary Family* should fly high.

SFXCITEMENT FACTOR ★★★

MID-SEASON MARVELS

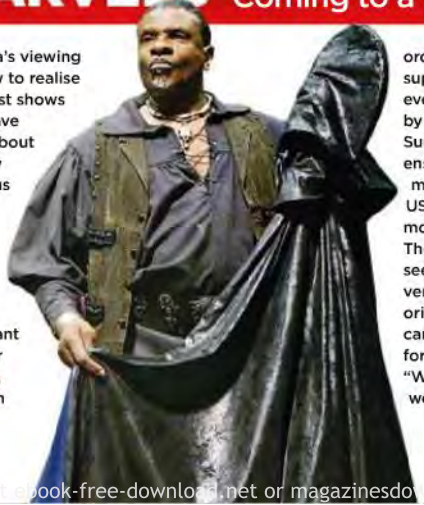
Coming to a TV screen near you soon...

We have to admit we're not really sure how to classify **V** this year – does the show's November return mean it's a quarter-season starter? – but we do know that its upcoming second season is make-or-break time. Disappointing ratings meant the show only just avoided the reaper's axe this summer, so the eyes of studio bosses will be watching closely to see if Anna's alien invasion deserves to continue.

Caprica will be in a similar situation when the second half of its first season continues in the new year. America's viewing public have been slow to realise that it's one of the best shows on TV, so why Syfy gave them time to forget about it by putting the show on a nine-month hiatus is something of a mystery.

Otherwise, mid-season is dominated by newcomers. The highest profile debutant (ie the one on a major network) is **The Cape**, NBC's drama about an ordinary guy who turns superhero when he loses everything after being framed by a criminal gang. The fact that Summer Glau co-stars should ensure some genre cred. Syfy, meanwhile, will be hoping its US **Being Human** remake is more *The Office* than *Coupling*. The fact that the producers seem keen to make the new version different to the brilliant original is a good sign, but we can't deny the main word forming on our lips right now is "Why?" Continuing the werewolf theme, MTV is bringing **Teen Wolf** to the small screen, possibly opening the floodgates to a whole wave of lycanthropic shows (there's plenty in development).

Looking even further into 2011, HBO go fantasy with George RR Martin adaptation **Game Of Thrones**, while TNT teams up with Steven Spielberg for a spot of alien invasion in **Falling Skies** (see page 12). Plus, we already know that Spielberg's *other* show, dino drama **Terra Nova**, will be kicking off *next* autumn – now that's forward planning.



Rex Features (1)

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Not to be confused with Mitchell and Webb's "The Event"...

THE EVENT SEASON ONE

THE PREMISE: A bunch of disparate people in the US find themselves thrust into an unfolding mystery involving a group of long-held detainees in Alaska that culminates in a very weird, unearthly event that's just the tip of the iceberg.

WHO'S IN IT: Jason Ritter, Blair Underwood, Ian Anthony Dale, Zeljko Ivanek

BURNING ISSUE: While it plays more thriller/mystery for the bulk of its introduction, there's sci-fi at the heart of this show... but are mainstream mythology-weary fans ready to jump into this one?

Q&A SHOWRUNNER AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER EVAN KATZ

▶ *The Event* is a bit of everything – thriller, mystery, character drama, sci-fi yarn – so how hard has it been to write?

Well, NBC has been generous and wise to allow us to hire high-level writers and so far so good, but it will be one of those shows that makes you sweat when you do it. We have James Wong (*X-Files*), David H Goodman (*Fringe*), Lisa Zwerling (*FlashForward*), and myself (*24*), so some genre people, some classic drama writers, and people in between.

▶ Flashbacks are usually used as a nonlinear tool to reveal your story à la *Lost* or *FlashForward*. Will you break that format?

Flashback-wise we made an early decision that episodes will only move forward in time. We have talked about taking an episode to do an origin story or a crazy changeup but that won't happen in the first six.

▶ You have a large ensemble cast. Are you limiting new characters so it doesn't get too unruly to follow like *Heroes*?

No, we're introducing some new characters.

▶ Of the characters, who do you consider the anchor of the story and what do you like about them?

Sean Walker played by Jason Ritter. One of the things I like is that Sean is not Jack Bauer. You can start a character way behind the start line compared to the first season of *24*.

THE BUZZ

It's cleverly constructed with lots of dual-meaning dialogue that will intrigue puzzle-hungry viewers. If answers come steadily, this will be worth trying. We're cautiously intrigued.

SFXCITEMENT FACTOR ★★★

Jason Ritter plays Sean Walker.

Is the country boy about to make that move to the city?

TRENDS

FAMILY is going to be big. Particularly not ordinary families. Aside from the new Chiklis show, obviously, we've got **Chuck**'s mum showing up in the form of Linda Hamilton, Dean with a new family in **Supernatural**, **Fringe**'s Walter Bishop both having daddy issues, Anna's mother is coming to **V** and, well, let's just say, **The Vampire Diaries** should really forget the "Previously On" recaps and give us a family tree instead.

The Powells from *No Ordinary Family* are part of TV's family fare.

SUPERHEROES – The trend that will never die, despite **Heroes**' best effort. **Smallville**'s coming to an end but **The Cape** and **No Ordinary Family** keep the torch burning for small screen superheroics.

WEREWOLVES – Only AMC with **The Walking Dead** has cottoned on that zombies are the next big thing. Meanwhile the rest of TV labours on with the idea that werewolves are the new vampires (they aren't). Expect things to go doggie-style in **The Vampire Diaries**, **Being Human** and **Teen Wolf**.

MORE EPISODIC STORYTELLING (allegedly) – One of the results of the fall-of-**Lost**-fatigue and the non-event that was **FlashForward** is that producers are falling over themselves to promise, "We won't be *that* complicated." Even the producers of **The Event**, a show with a concept that seems designed to be "*that* complicated".

LIGHTER TONE – After years of shows becoming "darker" and "grittier" there seems evidence that producers want to lighten up. Certainly newcomers **The Cape** and **No Ordinary Family** seem fairly light'n'fluffy, while the new showrunners on **Supernatural** seem to have given up any pretence the show could get any darker than season five. Even on the resolutely "dark" and "gritty" **Stargate Universe** we're promised that characters will lighten up a bit. Maybe one of them will smile...

LIMPING ON – Look, we're not dissing the quality of these shows, but it's becoming almost masochistic watching some of them, knowing they're teetering on the brink on cancellation. While it's obviously great to have new episodes of **Chuck** and **Medium**, your enjoyment is slightly sullied by the fact that they could suddenly be cancelled at any moment. Meanwhile, **Supernatural** is back with a season that nobody particularly wanted, so is going to have to work hard to prove itself, while with **Smallville**, the very fact we know it is coming to an end at last strangely makes it all the more exciting again.

SMALLVILLE

SEASON TEN

THE PREMISE: The Man of Steel comes of age in a small Midwestern town, where he falls in love, meets powerful allies and confronts equally powerful villains.
WHO'S IN IT: Tom Welling, Erica Durance, Justin Hartley, Cassidy Freeman
BURNING ISSUE: It was recently revealed that young Clark Kent will, at long last, don Superman's iconic red-blue-and-yellow suit this season. The only question is – when?

Q&A EXECUTIVE PRODUCER KELLY SOUDERS

Is this really the last season?
Yes. It's a nice round number to end it all out with.

Do you know the final shot?
Everyone expects it will be Clark in the costume. I will say we know the final shot!

In writing the ending, do you have to go back to season one and say, "What have we left behind?"
As we've gone through every season, there are things that we literally add to our wish list for the final season. So we're just literally gunning. Everybody's already exhausted; we're already shooting, too, because we're just trying to get everything thrown in there and do as much as we can. Everybody's excited for the season. Everybody came back energised. It's nice to know when it's going to end because that's a very rare gift. Usually you know three episodes before your final finale so we're very thrilled to have a whole year to plan.

Warner Bros is producing the next *Superman* movie. Is there going to be anything linked to the finale?
I don't know. I know there's another movie coming out. Obviously we talk with them. We have kind of a constant communication with DC and try to link up as much as we can. The Superman suit that you see in *Smallville* is actually the one from the movie. So we do try to coordinate it as often as we can.

Is Clark finally going to fly without aid?
Just stay tuned!

THE BUZZ

Showrunners Kelly Souders and Brian Peterson reignited a lot of fans' interest when they came on board last year. Now they should wrap up the saga in a manner befitting Supes.

SFXCITEMENT FACTOR ★★★

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Dark sets, grey outfits, no smiling... that's our *Stargate*!

SEASON TWO

STARGATE UNIVERSE

THE PREMISE: A mix of civilians, scientists and military soldiers are stranded out in the far reaches of the universe on the Ancient ship Destiny. Together they have to band together to get back to Earth.

WHO'S IN IT: Robert Carlyle, Louis Ferreira, David Blue, Alaina Huffman

BURNING ISSUE: When Destiny is taken over by Kiva of the Lucian Alliance, she plays hardball with Young by separating the civilians from the military contingent. She kills Rivers, shoots TJ and threatens to kill the rest of the personnel. Who will survive?

Expect more conflict, tension and people looking a tad glum.

"You gotta get new threads , son."

Q&A CO-CREATOR AND EXEC PRODUCER ROBERT COOPER

▶ Young and Rush have clashed from the beginning. How will that evolve?

The conflict between Rush and Young, while it is the cornerstone of the series, is in some ways meant to be one of the main obstacles standing in the way of who become our protagonists – Scott, Eli and Chloe. Those characters wish those two guys would just get along. So having to take sides and figure out who is right is one of the challenges those characters will face.

▶ What did the writing team learn about season one that they'll apply to season two?

There was certainly a reaction to the show that we took to heart – "Why do we want to watch a bunch of people who are just whining about not wanting to be there?" Certainly that was part of the story initially, and that came from wanting to create characters that had challenges before them. So I think it's important that we recommit our characters to the adventure of being aboard Destiny and make sure that we don't turn off viewers who would, in their fantasy world, love to be on that adventure. But again it's not going to happen overnight. It will get all of our characters to commit and evaluate their purpose for being on the Destiny, even to the point if an opportunity to go home would come up, they would choose to stay.

THE BUZZ

Darker, grittier and more human, *SGU* really found its voice as a complicated sci-fi character drama in season one. More high stakes and more purpose bode well for season two.

SFXCITEMENT FACTOR ★★★

FRINGE SEASON THREE

THE PREMISE: An estranged, but brilliant, father and son are paired together with FBI agent Olivia Dunham to investigate strange biological and fringe science cases that connect to form something called "The Pattern".

WHO'S IN IT: Anna Torv, Joshua Jackson, John Noble

BURNING ISSUE: The depth of the alternate universe is finally revealed when Walter and Olivia travel over to confront Bishop's former partner, William Bell. They meet alt versions of the Fringe team before Olivia is trapped in their universe.

Q&A EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JH WYMAN AND JEFF PINKNER

So what's season three going to be about?

Wyman: Every season we try to keep opening up the show more and more. At the end of season two we spent some time in the alternate universe, in fact we left a character [Olivia] there. This season we will really explore what it means to have two universes. Season two, in many ways was about secrets withheld and secrets coming out – largely the secret about Peter's origin – and now this season we are applying the consequences of those secrets.

Will the episodes go back and forth between both universes?

Pinkner: Yes, the show is about Olivia, Peter and Walter, so while we say we have two worlds to explore we will be exploring both from their point of view. There will be episodes all in the alternate universe but they will be with our core characters, or at least some of them in each instance. They will continue to have difficulty having trouble travelling between both.

Wyman: And there is a whole set of new characters that one would hope audiences become just as interested in. It's great and fun for us. It also gives us that gear shift.

There was finally a kiss between Olivia and Peter too. Was that a tough call?

Pinkner: Well, now we have a unique triangle where one guy and two of the same women – Olivia, Bolivia and Peter – are in a lover's triangle. It's a uniquely *Fringe*-like concept. We talked for a long time about what would be right. We have said the reason the show is called *Fringe* is because ultimately it's about these characters at the fringe of society, and by finding each other, they find where they fit.

THE BUZZ

Fringe's mythology came out to play in a big way by end of season two. Parallel universe stories will flip-flop in season three and that's got us giddier than Walter in a pantry.

SFXCITEMENT FACTOR ★★★★

Olivia Dunham really doesn't like that haircut.

An avid viewer of season three?

Fringe has broken away from its standalone-itis.

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NOT ONLY BUT ALSO

STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS

We're still waiting for that elusive live-action *Star Wars* TV show, but *The Clone Wars* is so much more than a mere stop-gap. With the Mandalorians and a revenge-obsessed teen Boba Fett introduced in season two, this year looks likely to take a turn towards the Dark Side as Anakin Skywalker ventures further towards his destiny as Palpatine's lackey. Throw in the fact that the CG animation's improving every year, and that galaxy far, far away is still a great place to be. Read more on page 22.

SANCTUARY

It's a big third year for *Sanctuary*, the monster-hunting show starring Amanda Tapping that started life on the internet. Syfy has upped the number of episodes from 13 to 20, and big changes are promised: "new and daunting" abnormals and revelations about the Sanctuary's past. Tapping has also revealed that, "We have two major threads that we'll be pursuing: one dealing with Helen's past a bit more, and one that is something that's much bigger than Big Bertha," the giant sea spider at the epicentre of season two's cliffhanger. The little show feels all growed up.

MEDIUM

There's not an awful lot of upfront scuttlebutt about The Show That Refuses To Die. Last season ended with a story that had "final episode" stamped all over (showrunner Glenn Gordon Caron seemed as taken by surprise that he had to produce more episodes as everybody else) with all loose ends neatly tidied up. So the new season of psychic investigations will need some shaking up to get things rebooted. All we do know is that the season opener, "Ready For the World", has a *Freaky Friday* vibe, and that this season will apparently get weirder and edgier.

Episodes will flip between two universes.

The regular cast will be joined by some fan-pleasing names this season.

CHUCK SEASON FOUR

THE PREMISE: Tech nerd Chuck Bartowski transforms into a super spy when a secret government program, the Intersect, is downloaded into his head. Now he's trying to balance his secret life with his everyday life.

WHO'S IN IT: Zachary Levi, Yvonne Strahovski, Joshua Gomez, Adam Baldwin

BURNING ISSUE: Chuck promised his big sis Ellie that he would quit the spy biz, but a posthumous message from their spy dad portends a bigger destiny and a new quest.

Q&A CO-CREATORS AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CHRIS FEDAK AND JOSH SCHWARTZ

▶ What is Chuck facing in season four?

Chris Fedak: Part of the season is the search for mom, which is essentially Chuck's quest. At the end of last season he quit the spy life because his sister couldn't bear the idea of him living this life. But then essentially his father tells him he needs him to find mom; it's the thing he has been working for years. Now Chuck has to try and find mom, being his own kind of rogue spy, and also juggle with the fact that he told Ellie that this isn't what he wants to do. We also have the CIA-owned Buy More coming back. At the end of last season, we blew up the Buy More, sending everyone to the four winds. Now we have to bring them back together.

▶ How did you manage to snag Linda Hamilton as Mom Bartowski?

Josh Schwartz: There was a very short list of people that we were excited by, and we thought fans would be excited by. We really take our cue from fans and they put it out there that that's who they wanted to see as mom. When we met with Linda she said, "I hear I'm Chuck's mom!" That was based on the rumours out there... and who are we to say no to Sarah Connor?

Chris: We like to cast around the shows Chuck and Morgan love. I think for Chuck he's a huge *Terminator* fan and for Morgan, he's all about *Beauty And The Beast*. SFX

THE BUZZ

The charming show that won't be killed. Chuck finally wooed his gal Sarah, but now he's got to lie to his sis and follow his dad's unfinished path to find their mother.

SFXCITEMENT FACTOR ★★★

DEAD RECKONING

THE MEN BRINGING THE WALKING DEAD TO LIFE TELL JOSEPH MCCABE WHY ZOMBIES ROCK

THE WALKING DEAD
SEASON ONE

THE PREMISE: Police officer Rick Grimes leads his family and a small band of survivors across a zombie-strewn apocalyptic American landscape. Based on the hit comic book by writer Robert Kirkman.

WHO'S IN IT: Andrew Lincoln, Sarah Wayne Callies, Jon Bernthal, Laurie Holden, Emma Bell

BURNING ISSUE: Few serialised horror shows survive on US TV, and there's never been a weekly zombie drama before. Can *Walking Dead* buck the trend?

THE BUZZ

Few know the genre better than creator Frank Darabont, make-up maestro Greg Nicotero's zombies look ace, and *Walking Dead* is an unputdownable book.

SFXCITEMENT FACTOR

Few people are as happy to talk about death as Frank Darabont and Greg Nicotero.

The Academy Award-nominated director and the acclaimed make-up effects wizard began their careers working with the likes of – in Darabont's case – Stephen King (on *Night Shift*'s "The Woman In The Room") and – in the case of Nicotero – George Romero (on *Day Of The Dead*). And the two men have continued to fuel their work, individually and as collaborators, with a limitless love of the macabre. So it's no surprise they view their latest project, *The Walking Dead* – a TV adaptation of writer Robert Kirkman's comic book about a band of folks fighting for survival in a zombie apocalypse – as a culmination of sorts. The pair has, with their cast, taken a break from fourteen-hour shooting days to visit San Diego today, and present footage from their upcoming epic to an eager audience of horror aficionados at this year's San Diego Comic-Con. They're a little moved by the experience.

"When we all watched the trailer for the first time today," Nicotero tells *SFX*, "it was overwhelming. I kind of got choked up. I got chills. It was really strange. I looked over at Kirkman and he's wiping away a tear. I'm like, 'Are you choked up?' He's like, 'No! Are you? I've seen it ten times.' Then I looked over and everybody had that »

Frank Darabont and co: bringing out the big guns.

More at ebookfreeforall.blogspot.com/magazinesdo

The Walking Dead's make-up is some of the best seen on US TV.

"FRANK AND I HAVE BEEN FRIENDS FOR YEARS. WE ALL LOVE RAY HARRYHAUSEN, WE LOVE GEORGE ROMERO, WE LOVE JOHN CARPENTER" GREG NICOTERO

This year's Great North Run participants...

ANDREW LINCOLN

THE NATIVE LONDONER ON THE "MESSY" SIDE OF HEROISM...

▶ What attracted you to *Walking Dead*?
I love that it's primal. It's raw. That's what this is like. It feels raw, messy, shambolic sometimes, and real.

▶ Why do you think there's been such a zombie resurgence in pop culture?
The genre I don't know so much about, but it seems to be the representation of your paranoia or whatever you want it to be – your inner fears, the darkness. And also a visual embodiment of mortality. So I think it's a beautiful allegory, not to sound too pretentious. It makes complete sense that you would want to do something like this, because of the world that you inhabit.

▶ In the comic book, Rick instructs his young son on how to use a gun in order to survive. How is the show dealing with his parenting skills?
We haven't as yet reached that point. Our parental instincts are still very much intact. The protective nurturing instinct is still in effect. So we haven't reached any strange compromises that I know the graphic novel reaches very quickly. We'll have to deal with that. There was an attack the other night. At one point I looked at all the children that were on set and said, "Are you guys cool? Are you comfortable with all these things?" They've got guardians there, and they all seem okay. There is always that responsibility, absolutely. But no-one has been compromised. Obviously we want it to be as real and as true to the tone of the book as we possibly can make it.

same reaction. Everyone was crying. I guess because we're all *in* it, that to actually look down and see the audience and just feel the emotion come out of it... It's really been fantastic.

"You know, Frank and I have been friends for 16, 18 years. We speak the same language. Guys like us or Quentin or Robert Rodriguez or Guillermo Del Toro, we all love Ray Harryhausen, we love George Romero, we love John Carpenter. We kind of share this weird..."

"We've seen *The Navy Vs The Night Monsters* at three o'clock in the morning," laughs Darabont. "We speak that shorthand."

It's shorthand that comes in handy when Darabont and Nicotero film *The Walking Dead*'s zombie hordes.

"It's interesting when we're on a show like this," says Nicotero. "There was one day when we were shooting a bunch of walkers in the street outside of one of the houses, and there was one guy who was just overacting and way too jittery. Frank sort of looked at me across the room, and I went over and said to the guy, 'Hey, could you just take it down a little bit? You're kind of standing out a little bit too much.' I walk back over to Frank and, literally, we're just like, 'Done. Taken care of.'"

"We know which zombie isn't working here," says Darabont. "Just deal with it."

Maybe zombies come in dwarf-size too?

PAGE TO SCREEN

What does appear to be working, according to both filmmakers, is their attempt to bring *Walking Dead* comic illustrator Charles Adlard's vision to the screen while maintaining their own sensibilities.

Darabont gives immediate credit to Nicotero. "Great kudos to Greg who is really the zombie king. I feel like all his zombie experience has led him to this. I think this is sort of going to be the jewel in that zombie crown. I've encouraged him. I was like, 'Greg, put your best on the table.' Whatever you wanted to do with a zombie all these years and been frustrated for whatever reason, we now have the opportunity. Do something really cool with it.' He played a zombie eating a deer, and the make-up that he and his guys crafted for himself is great. It's my screensaver at home now. It's so messed up." »

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Day of the Dead – and then some.

"FRANK WOULD SAY, 'PICK THE 20 ZOMBIES FOR TOMORROW.' SO I WOULD GO, 'OKAY,' AND GO THROUGH OUR ZOMBIE PHONE BOOK" GREG NICOTERO

Each zombie was painstakingly created from scratch.

DEAD MAN WALKING

WALKING DEAD CREATOR TALKS EXCLUSIVELY TO JOSEPH MCCABE

Comic-book writer Robert Kirkman conceived of *The Walking Dead* when he thought about the one aspect of zombie movies he didn't like – that they had to end. It makes sense then that his ongoing saga is heading for television, a medium that loves never-ending stories. And Kirkman tells *SFX* he couldn't be happier about the man behind the TV Dead, Frank Darabont.

"He knows what makes *Walking Dead Walking Dead*," says Kirkman. "I think that the show is gonna be really kind of special just because of his involvement."

The creator adds that he's happy with the changes Darabont has made to his story, including the addition of two new characters (played by Michael Rooker and Norman Reedus).

"I wouldn't want the show to be a carbon copy of the series, because the series has a pretty high readership and I don't want those people to be bored from watching the show. I personally wouldn't enjoy watching the show knowing what's going to happen. There's going to be surprises. I would use Darabont's adaptation of Stephen King's *The Mist* as a pretty good example of how he can be completely faithful to something while also changing it in ways that improve it. I think we'll see that in this series."

Robert Kirkman's spine-chilling, money-spinning original comic.

"Really?" laughs Nicotero, "Woohoo. I'm on Frank's computer!"

"Frank brings up a really great point," he says. "Because it is one of those situations where the experience I have had has culminated to this point. It's 'Try this' and 'Try that' and 'What works here?' and 'What works there?' We look at Charlie's artwork and see the physical attributes that the zombies have. They're all thin. They have kind of long necks and their mouths are all distorted and they have flies buzzing around them. They just have a really specific look – the cheekbones are high, the mouths are really thin. We had three days of zombie school where we auditioned everybody and two great things came out of it: one of them was we could see who was a good performer and who needed help; but also I could go through and say, 'You look like a drawing out of the book. You look like a drawing out of the book…' So we would take them."

"The thing is, when you start building stuff up on someone's face, when you have a great canvas to start with… If you have somebody who's really slender and has great features and you put a couple of pieces on them, all of a sudden they don't look like they have make-up on. It looks organic. And in the 26 years that I've done this, that has never happened. Frank would say to me, 'Pick the 20 zombies for tomorrow.' So I would go, 'Okay,' and go through – we have a little phone book, a zombie phone book – and pick the people. When you have 20 people made up and they all have this physical build that looks like they're right out of the graphic novel… We would really try to maintain a continuity; and it's worked. It's worked really well."

GENRE GEEK

Nicotero and Darabont are joined today by *The Walking Dead*'s producer Gale Anne Hurd, herself a celebrated genre veteran – having co-written *The Terminator* and produced *Aliens*, *The Abyss* and *Tremors*. Hurd explains how she and Darabont went about developing what will be the first weekly zombie TV drama.

"Obviously I'm a genre geek from way back," she tells us, "back before it was even fashionable. I've always had a little zombie love, and there really is nothing better than Robert Kirkman's *The Walking Dead*. But Frank and Robert had been working on it previously, and there actually was initially a script commissioned by »

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"AMC WERE WILLING TO TAKE RISKS. BUT THEY WOULDN'T TAKE RISKS ON SOMETHING THAT WAS JUST A ZOMBIE SERIES"
GALE ANNE HURD

Question is – will the show be too strong meat for telly?

leading women in this, obviously. So they actually kept saying, 'Push it. Push it more.'"

In an attempt to push boundaries, Hurd adds that some liberties have been taken with Robert Kirkman's original comic; though Kirkman has approved, and remains heavily involved with the show. "Not just in name," says Hurd, "but in writing episode four, being on set, being involved in the casting process. But at the same time we're also departing. We're departing enough and then always coming back to the comic book."

"I love maybe throwing an extra character or two in that's really gonna shake the ingredients up a little bit more," says Darabont. "Put you a little bit more off your feet or on your guard."

"What was funny," says Nicotero, "is that I had read the original comic book when it first came out. I purposely didn't reread it when Frank had given me the pilot script to read. It's interesting because some of the divergences were so well integrated in the script that I couldn't remember if it had happened or not. With Michael Rooker's character, there's a really great piece that Frank wrote. I even thought that I knew where it was gonna go, and then it went in a completely different way. It's really exciting. But the fact that Frank is so respectful of the flavour of what Kirkman had laid out, it's like, 'Okay, we got a little bit of time so let's go down this road and let's check this out for a little while and then we'll go back over'; and then you sort of get back into the key Kirkman moments, like the zombie eating the deer, which is a really classic moment, an iconic moment in the graphic novel."

"So the thing is," says the zombie king, "hitting those moments that the audience is gonna go, 'Oh my god, I remember that.' And then a new thing comes up and having the audience think, 'Wow, that's a great idea,' but it's still within the same world." SFX

The Walking Dead *comes to FX in early November.*

Cage fighting: you know it ain't gonna be pretty.

NBC. It was not quite the home for *Walking Dead*, and I guess NBC came to that realisation. And when they decided not to proceed with it, it was kind of out there homeless. Homeless zombies! Last year at Comic-Con, Frank, Robert and I went out to dinner. I'd already been in touch with the folks at AMC about starting over and adapting *The Walking Dead* for an AMC series. So it literally was here at Comic-Con that this new genesis of *The Walking Dead* began. We pitched AMC in October, they ordered a script in November, in January they gave us a green light. And I think it was some time in February or early March that they decided they were gonna, as opposed to shooting a pilot first, give us a six-episode order."

Hurd credits AMC with encouraging her to go even further than she was initially inclined. "They were willing to take risks. But they wouldn't take risks on something that was just a zombie series. They wanted to know who the characters were; they wanted to know that there were human stories, complex characters with a dark side. Because that's the case in all of their shows, the really complex leading men. We've also got some

Fancy pinning one of these on your wall?

SARAH WAYNE CALLIES

THE WALKING DEAD'S LEADING LADY SOUNDS OFF ON MOTHERHOOD AND CAREER CLIFF-DIVING...

▶ What was your reaction when you first heard of *The Walking Dead*?
That it was absolutely ludicrous and impossible, to charge at a cliff at full speed and jump off and hope that you have wings on your back. As an actor it's exciting to try something that's such a risk. And this show is. I think one of the greatest risks is you don't get to the end of the pilot and go, "Ahhh. This is what we're gonna see every week." For us, we get to the end of shooting an episode and we get to the next one and we go, "Whoa. This episode is utterly different." They're almost in different genres from week to week, some of them are action and some of them are sort of drawing room intense family Somerset Maugham kind of things. Some of them are very silent and quiet. Some of them are covered in zombies and some of them have almost none. It's so exciting to be a part of something like that.

▶ How has the cast adjusted to becoming a part of the zombie subculture?
Everyone is neck deep in this, even those of us who are coming in with no relationship to zombie culture, with no relationship to the horror genre. We have all drunk the Kool-Aid. It's beautiful to see that everyone is so passionate about this.

▶ Is it difficult to play a parent in this apocalyptic world?
It's my first time playing a parent. It's interesting. It's very clear. There's no "What do I want in this scene?" You want to save your kid. In every scene, always – save your kid, save your kid, keep your family together. It's so clear. It's a nice anchor, a real nice anchor.

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Anthony Head

Uther Pendragon isn't evil, he's just a man of his times, reckons the man who plays him

Words: **Dave Golder** • Photography: ©**BBC**

Check out the official BBC *Merlin* website and you'll find Uther Pendragon listed under "Heroes". That suits Anthony Head just fine: "When people say, 'He's an evil guy!' I go, 'Well no. He's just old school. He's an old school father and an old school king. His past indiscretions and misdemeanours are fairly well up there with the best of despots, but he *is* living in the Dark Ages, and there are other people on the board who are ready to usurp his kingdom at the drop of a hat. He lives by the rule, 'Strike fear into the heart of your enemies – that is the way to maintain a balanced world.' It's unfortunate that his enemies include innocent people who he feels have transgressed by using magic."

Bizarrely, Head found some unlikely inspiration for playing the magic-loathing king: a job presenting a documentary show called *True Horror* back in 2005. "We went to South Africa to investigate Muti killings and I met people involved in white witchcraft. But I also saw evidence of people who are drawn to the dark side, and who do some despicable things to innocent people in the name of magic. So I really did get to understand why someone would become unnerved by the concept of magic."

So while Head admits he has a sneaking admiration for Uther ("mainly for hanging in there as long as he has") he's not sure he'd go down the pub with him for a chat.

"I don't think he'd be a terribly entertaining person. I don't think he'd be stingy; he'd probably buy you a few rounds. But he'd be terribly competitive – really annoying to play darts with, or pool. And probably be quite condescending. Rude to the serving staff. Tip? No. Because that's their job."

But what would they chat about?

Biodata

- **OCCUPATION:** Actor
- **BORN:** 20 February 1954
- **FROM:** Camden, London
- **GREATEST HITS:** The Nescafe Gold Blend ads, *VR-5*, *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, *Little Britain*, *Manchild*, *Merlin*
- **RANDOM FACT:** Anthony Head's partner Sarah Fisher is a leading TTouch practitioner – that's a holistic method of training horses and other animals.

"I might try to broach the idea of change," he says cautiously. "He seems to be entrenched, bless him."

But is he worried that, at some point, he will have to get the boot?

"At some point Arthur has got to become king, ergo Uther can't be around. But there's more than one way to kill a cat…" he adds mysteriously.

What, so Uther could hang around, all bitter and twisted?

"I don't think that's how it works. He certainly wasn't hanging around when Arthur married Guinevere."

But the writers are not exactly taking the myths very seriously…

"They're taking them incredibly seriously!" he says with mock outrage that breaks into a laugh. "Seriously, though, there are a couple of really nice surprises coming up in series three, not least of which are ways they bring elements of the classic myths into our tale. It's clever."

Head is a great ambassador for the show, gleefully promising massive FX, big battles and meatier storylines in series three, before going off on one of his favourite hobby horses.

"The effects are just really cool. I think the CGI is the best on television. What I love is when people go, 'Oh, that castle – terrible CGI.' And you're thinking, 'No, you twerp, it's real.'

"Every time we shoot something in there it takes my breath away. We shot a wedding in there last month, and it looked just stunning. I don't quite understand why this show hasn't won some craft awards if nothing else. It is beautifully designed. I think the costumes are stunning. I think the make-up is wonderful. I think the general design is extraordinary. You don't get production values like this on television any more."

One of the fringe benefits of being on *Merlin* is the filming they do in France each year, at Pierrefonds, just outside Paris, though this year the foreign shoot didn't last quite as long.

"The thing that's changed is not the exteriors, but the interiors. They've built a very clever set in Cardiff. In the past we tended to use a lot of the corridors in the castle, because they're beautiful. But they've managed to replicate some of the architecture in Cardiff, so we're now able to shoot some stuff on the soundstage. It means time we would have spent shooting in France, we don't now have to."

He's also just come back from San Diego Comic-Con, where he was helping publicise the show which airs in the US on Syfy. Was it like déjà vu for the former *Buffy* star?

"Yeah, but it's a lot bigger now," says Head. "I just wish we were in there a little longer. We got to walk up one side of the main hall, and that was it. I wanted to go out and buy stuff."

Including some action figures of Rupert Giles?

"I don't need more of those. I have a couple of boxes at home!"

Blimey. Does he flog them down at Frome car boot sale?

"Ha ha! No, but Katie, who plays Morgana, did say, 'Could I have one of your action figures?' I said, 'Yes, and if you're very lucky, I might give you the limited edition Halloween version, with poncho, Mexican hat and chainsaw.'" SFX

Merlin *is on BBC One every Saturday.*

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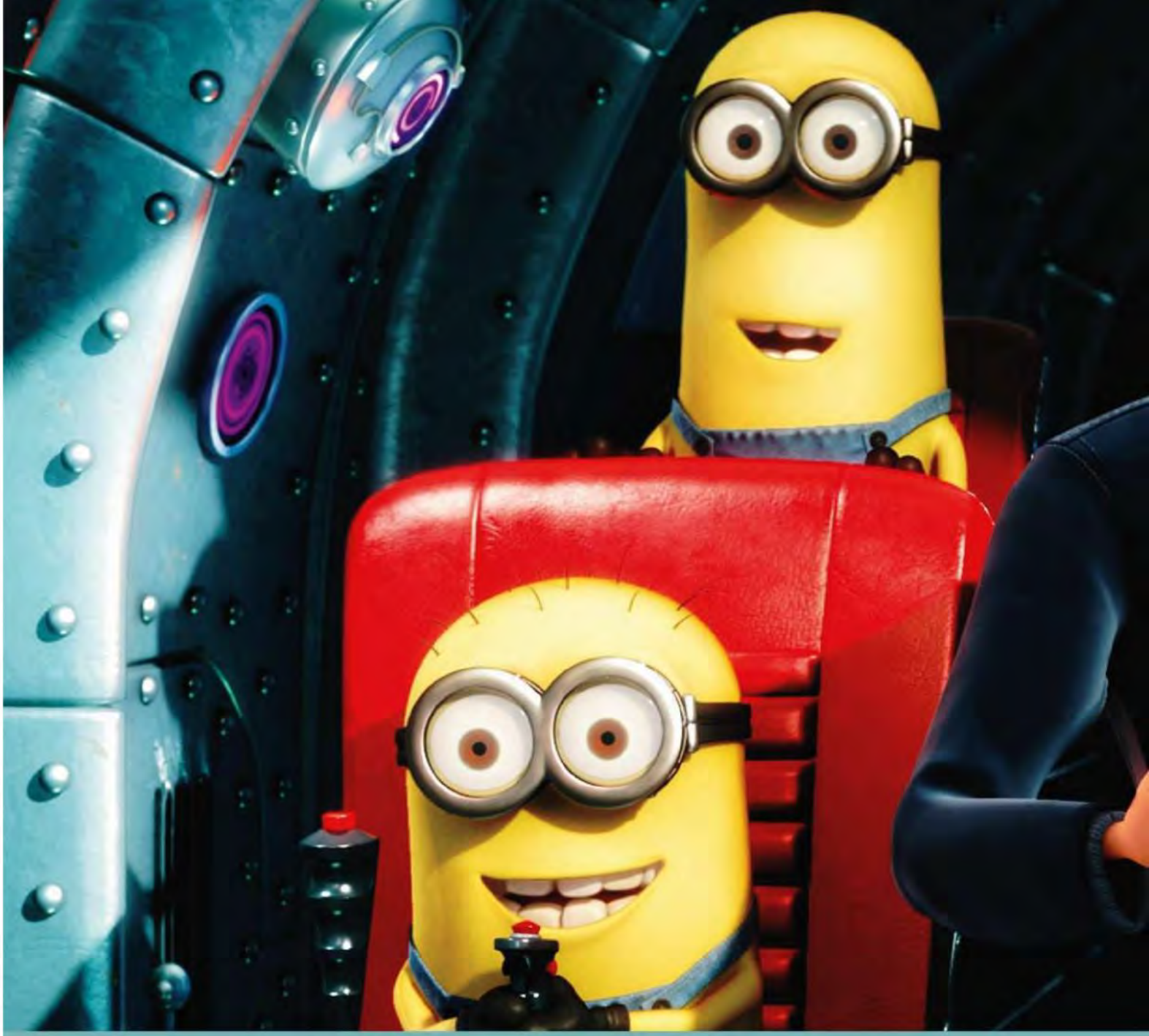
"I have boxes of Rupert Giles action figures!"



BAD TO THE BONE

Pixar may be the critical and commercial darlings of the animated world but this year they have some despicable competition, as Jordan Farley finds out

Five-fingering the Pyramid Of Giza or the Great Wall Of China might be nothing more than child's play for Gru, the wicked scoundrel at the icy heart of new CG animation *Despicable Me*. But in the year of the indestructible *Toy Story 3*, who better to swipe the family-friendly-toon crown from under the noses of genre kings Pixar than the world's number one supervillain?

At least that's the nefarious scheme of animation über-producer Chris Meledandri, who is sitting down with *SFX* in a swanky hotel in London some months before the world gets to clap eyes on Gru and the gang. His cool conduct tells a different story, but this is an anxious time for the former founding president of 20th Century Fox Animation who, after raking in more

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Millions and millions of Minions.

than $1 billion with the likes of *Ice Age*, *Robots* and *Horton Hears A Who!*, upped sticks in 2007 to form independent production company Illumination Entertainment. Their first project – a tale of one man and his Minions.

"I loved the idea from the first minute [writer] Sergio Pablos started telling me the story, the idea of a character as a protagonist who would traditionally be thought of as an antagonist," Meledandri waxes excitedly – his focus firmly on *SFX*, not the surrounding cameras and lighting rigs which have us shuffling nervously, wishing we'd remembered to pack a decent hairbrush. "I liked making a movie that turned the stereotypic notion of a villain and a hero on its ear and that came from both my own love of movies about antiheroes as well as having shared a lot of movie experiences with my own sons who preferred villains to what they thought were bland, predictable heroic characters. He's a supervillain who is essentially a really good guy and not doing anything that's really bad but has a dose of wickedness in him that I think we all do, I know I certainly do."

A rogue he may be, but in the land of the wicked the meanest, most inventive crim is king – a set-up which proved irresistible to producer Janet Healy, an ILM veteran who has worked on some of the defining effects-heavy sci-fi flicks of the past 35 years like *Terminator 2* and *Jurassic Park*. "Gru wants to be the best villain in the world, which is the worst villain in the world I guess! In our world there are villains and there are ordinary people and that's it. They have villain newspapers and a Bank Of Evil where they borrow their money," says an equally enthusiastic Healy when we speak to her from Illumination's Paris-based studios. "We don't really explain it that much, we just accept those as the rules of the world."

THE PIXAR FACTOR

With Woody, Buzz and the rest of the toy box coming to terms with life past their prime in their latest adventure, it seems "over the hill" is in for CG animation this year as Gru must also face up to the fact he's no longer the world-conquering evil mastermind he once was. Blofeld may have had Bond to deal with, but greasy teens with a predilection for propelling aquatic life are equally meddlesome in *Despicable* »

One of them's clearly fathered by the milkman...

Me's primary coloured universe. "Gru has some competition from this young supervillain called Vector so we wanted early on in the story to set up the conflict and have that drive a lot of the action and the humour," says Healy. "He thinks he's the greatest thing on Earth, he's the new generation of villain and he shows Gru up pretty easily. So to outdo his nemesis Gru decides he's going to steal the Moon because it's one of the biggest heists you can imagine."

The Pixar comparisons don't end there. Setting up his own independent studio meant Meledandri was able to put the script at the forefront of the production process and marry it to the visual design to a degree celebrity-faced-fish movies and other atrocities of the noughties CG toon explosion couldn't match. "The thing is we actually developed the screenplay and the visual design hand in hand so there's a constant interplay between what our screenwriters, Cinco Paul and Ken Daurio, were creating on the page and what was created visually," he says. "Their involvement goes beyond just screenwriting. They lived with us, so there was an exchange back and forth between the written word and the visual expression of the characters that went on throughout the movie."

Hook-nosed chrome-dome Gru was the epitome of this process – being the first character outlined on the page and the last locked in animation. "For Chris Renaud, our director, the Bondian villain was clearly an influence, but others were thinking about Nosferatu so the different collaborators were coming with different influences, which in this case melded together through Carter Goodrich's gifted design into a truly memorable character," he explains. "When you look at the key contributors to the depiction of a character in an animated movie it's this wonderful collaboration between director, art director, character designer, myself and the other producers, and then not the least of which is Steve Carell's influence in terms of how the vocal contribution influences the physical performance and the directing animators."

WHERE THE HEART IS

Carell wasn't the team's only casting coup, with the cream of Hollywood's comedy cavalcade signing up to star alongside, including Russell Brand as Gru's ancient mad genius assistant Dr Nefario, Jason Segel as whippersnapper Vector, *Flight Of The Conchords*' Jermaine Clement and, umm, Julie Andrews as Gru's apathetic mother ("She's no Mary Poppins!" quips Healy). Along with shrink rays, freeze rays, robo-cookies and Gru's expendable army of squishy yellow Minions the laughs come thick and fast, but as only a handful of animation studios seem to have grasped so far, *Spy Vs Spy* shenanigans and the like can only get you so far. And Gru's icy heart is about to be melted by the three orphan girls he needs to pull off the heist of the century.

"What I like about it is it's boy-friendly with a lot of cool gadgets, big ships with lots of weapons, but then there are these little girls who take over his life and are really appealing," says Healy. "So in the end it's about a family that's not a conventional family, something that will be heart-warming to everybody. Our goal with Gru was always to make him a little scary to the girls, so the journey was more rewarding. It was crucial you could believe in him having this arc and becoming a good dad."

"The audience has to make their own minds up to root for Gru"

It's a point echoed by Meledandri, who's quick to praise the film's razor walk between rebellious irreverence and a warm, fuzzy heart. "I think it's one of the great accomplishments of the movie that the film found that balance. It's a very, very tricky line to walk and I think the key to why it works is as much about the performance choices as it is about the dialogue choices ultimately."

It seems Meledandri was right to let the pressure bounce off him. The success of *Toy Story 3* around the world (the highest grossing animation ever at the time of writing) means *Despicable Me* is unlikely to dethrone Pixar at the box office, but with a sequel already confirmed it seems daring to be different has its rewards. "We kept telling ourselves when we were writing, 'Jeez, there's no hero!' but it just wasn't the story we were telling. One of the reasons it works so well is because the audience has to make their own minds up to root for Gru. We chose to tell this other story and avoid the traditional villain versus hero – it just felt more interesting to us." SFX

Despicable Me *is released by Universal on Friday 15 October.*

Gru: he'll grow on you.

Who's our victor? Vector?

Despicable Me is a roller-coaster ride...

THE GADGET SHOW

The sci-fi boys' toys that we want now...

Hoverboard (*Back To The Future Part II*)

Skateboards have always felt like too much effort, but without pesky friction holding us back we'd be popping ollies in no time. Urban legend has it hoverboards really exist – a cheeky rumour started by the *BTTF* publicity drive in the '80s.

Jetpack (*Thunderball*)

Thanks to Q, Bond has all the best gadgets – from his humble Swiss Army keychain to his Aston Martin. Best of all though is *Thunderball*'s jetpack – absurdly impractical but perfect for a swift rooftop getaway when it's your turn to make the tea.

Neuralyzer (*Men In Black*)

We've all done things we regret – the less said about the wee hours of the *SFX* Weekender the better – so what could be more useful than this handy portable memory eraser from *Men In Black* to remove those rotten memories for good.

Gestural computer interface (*Minority Report*)

As we speak, this may only be a few years off reaching the mainstream, with Microsoft adopting a gesture-based interface for their Kinect motion controller, so soon you too could be waving your arms like a ninny to move a few folders.

Lightsaber (*Star Wars*)

Not exactly safe for anyone except wizened Jedis but possibly the most sought-after gadget in the galaxy. In the absence of Stormtroopers to cut down to size they could make a neat cheese knife or be perfect for finishing off burgers on the BBQ.

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ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Check out the first two series of one of Britain's best telefantasy shows, now remastered on Blu-ray!

"Nothing is forgotten. Nothing is ever forgotten"

That's Michael Praed we're quoting there – aka Robin of Loxley, aka the Hooded Man, aka Robin Hood. And he's got a point. Nothing *is* forgotten, nor should it be when it's as good as this cherished '80s series, one of *SFX*'s favourite shows. Forget your BBC Robin Hoods (pants) or your Kevin Costners (rubbish) or even your Russell Crowes (er, old) and watch the legend the way it was MEANT to be told!

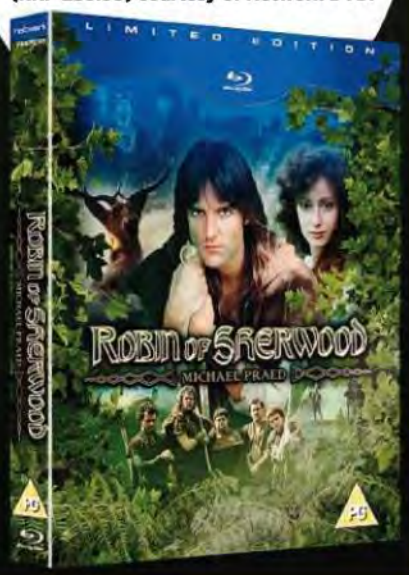
Not many series can claim to be both gritty and ethereal at the same time, but Richard Carpenter's atmospheric medieval drama managed it in spades, combining realistic action, evocative locations and all the dirt, grime and filth of ancient England with the magic, moodiness and spirituality of a fairytale.

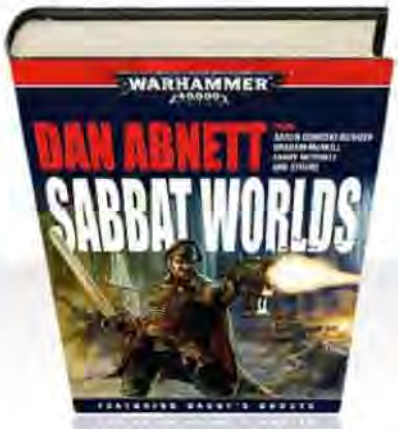
Michael Praed's Robin Hood teams up with his "merry" band of followers – including Ray Winstone as the thuggish Will Scarlet, one of the actor's personal favourite roles – to torment and tease the malicious Sheriff of Nottingham (Nickolas Grace in full-on "loathsome" mode). Amidst your usual "robbing from the rich to give to the poor" gubbins is, unusually, a rich vein of fantasy which features pagan god Herne the Hunter championing Robin's cause... which comes in handy when our hero finds himself battling evil sorcerers and Satanic priestesses (did we mention this was a teatime ITV show? Kids back then must've wondered what had hit them...).

The series was so popular that it spawned a hit soundtrack from Clannad, sent Praed off to Hollywood to star in *Dynasty* and even managed to slip one of its wholly original characters, Nasir the Saracen, into the Robin Hood mythos by osmosis (check out Morgan Freeman in *Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves*). If you haven't seen *Robin Of Sherwood* yet, now's your chance – and rest assured, it's still as fresh and enchanting as it ever was. You'll never forget it...

Now on Blu-ray!

One of the show's greatest assets was its look – all hazy forests and grim castle walls – and now you can experience it on this new, remastered Blu-ray boxset, out on HD for the first time on 25 October (RRP £59.99) courtesy of Network DVD.





Dan Abnett

He's the man with the golden pen – a 3,000-words-a-minute model that can lay waste to whole star systems...

Words: **Guy Haley** • Photography: **Will Ireland**

Dan Abnett is one of the UK's most prolific SF authors, producing up to 300,000 words a year (his estimate, probably conservative). Beginning his career at Marvel UK in the 1980s, Abnett became a mainstay of *2000 AD* in the '90s. For years, comics of all kinds provided his bread and butter – he was *SFX*'s regular comics reviewer, too – before he began penning novels for Games Workshop's Black Library. Work on *Torchwood*, *Doctor Who* and *Primeval* titles followed. With his first non tie-in novel *Triumff* out last year from Angry Robot and his first movie, *Ultramarines*, in production, the fickle gods of SF have amply rewarded Abnett's industriousness.

Ultramarines is Games Workshop's first foray into motion pictures. It's set in their dystopian 41st millennium where mankind's Imperium stands on the brink of destruction, and features their signature Space Marines – genetically modified warriors. The company has licensed out its intellectual property in the past, but it's long been wary of dipping its toe into the murky pool of Hollywood, fearing a loss of control (think Stallone, Dredd, no helmet...). Not so here. With London-based Codex Pictures making the feature and Abnett scripting, we'll be getting a proper Warhammer 40,000 film.

"Retaining the essential atmosphere was the key thing," says Abnett. "My focus was a story that was absolutely true to the spirit of 40k. I needed it to fit inside the production constraints – 'Listen, Dan, this may be an animated film, but you simply can't ask for 80 million Space Marines to come galloping out of the Eye of Terror on choppers,' they said – and I was determined not to dilute the bleak but heroic feel of the universe. Most of all, I wanted it to be a story that suited a film, rather than something designed to fit a novel or a comic. From what I've seen so far, it's fantastic. The action, the amazing voice cast [John Hurt, Terence Stamp, Sean Pertwee]. And it's got mood and atmosphere. It's been a very interesting, educational job. I want to do more work for film."

Biodata

- **OCCUPATION:** Freelance author
- **BORN:** 12 October 1965
- **FROM:** Maidstone, Kent
- **GREATEST HITS:** *Sinister Dexter* and *Kingdom* (*2000 AD*), *Gaunt's Ghosts* and *Eisenhorn* (novel series, Black Library), *Guardians Of The Galaxy*, *Nova*
- **RANDOM FACT:** His great-great-something-something grandmother was Lady Emma Hamilton.

Although GW provides much employment for Abnett, he continues to work for others. He's still writing strips for *2000 AD*, and together with Andy Lanning he signed a deal with Marvel two years ago to work on their cosmic characters. These are but two of his regular gigs.

The secrets of Abnett's success are several. Although he tells us his specialisation was entirely accidental, he has an affinity for his "SF war" niche, so much so that real veterans sometimes assume he's served in combat. But chiefly he's done so well because he doesn't hold back when he's writing for other people's worlds.

"What is generally termed 'tie-in' fiction gets a really bad press," he says. "'It's not "proper" books! It's reheated crap churned out to cash in on a property!' Bollocks to that. There is a vast audience that wants to read good stories connected to their favourite show or film or whatever. If you think tie-in books are 'cheap' then you're saying that the audience is cheap too, so shame on you. I am constantly amused by the notion that I have two 'grades' of writing in me, my everyday style I use to lob out tie-in potboilers, and my Sunday best, proper quality style I only get out on special occasions to write 'real books' with. If you sit down and consciously think to yourself, 'I can knock this out using my economy rate writing,' then step away from the keyboard. The book's going to be shit, and you've got no business ripping readers off."

Having said all that, for such an imaginative man, you would have expected an "original" novel from him earlier than last year.

"I write whatever comes next," he says, "and for a long time, it was hard to find a gap in the schedule for *Triumff*. But it was immensely rewarding. I'm finishing my second Angry Robot novel now. It's called *Embedded*, a combat SF thriller, but in a rather different vein to the war stories I write for Black Library."

Another novel, on top of everything else? "I work a lot because I love what I do," he says. "I'm not suggesting it's never hard work – everyone has bad days at the office. But I'm doing what I really want to be doing. I have had to slow down, though. In September '09, I was suddenly pole-axed by seizures. Turned out, after two anxious months waiting for a diagnosis, to be 'just' late onset epilepsy. I had to gently get back on the horse, reinvent my working day, reduce the stress and work around the anti-epilepsy meds. It was an oddly satisfying experience, very liberating. I had been working ridiculously hard for too long. I got time to take stock. No more late-nighters for me. Lots of relaxed, clean living. I go to bed, get a good night's sleep, rise early. I'm sitting there at 6.30am. I can't believe I've been missing out on such a great time of day for so long." SFX

Sabbat Worlds *anthology is published in October by the Black Library.*

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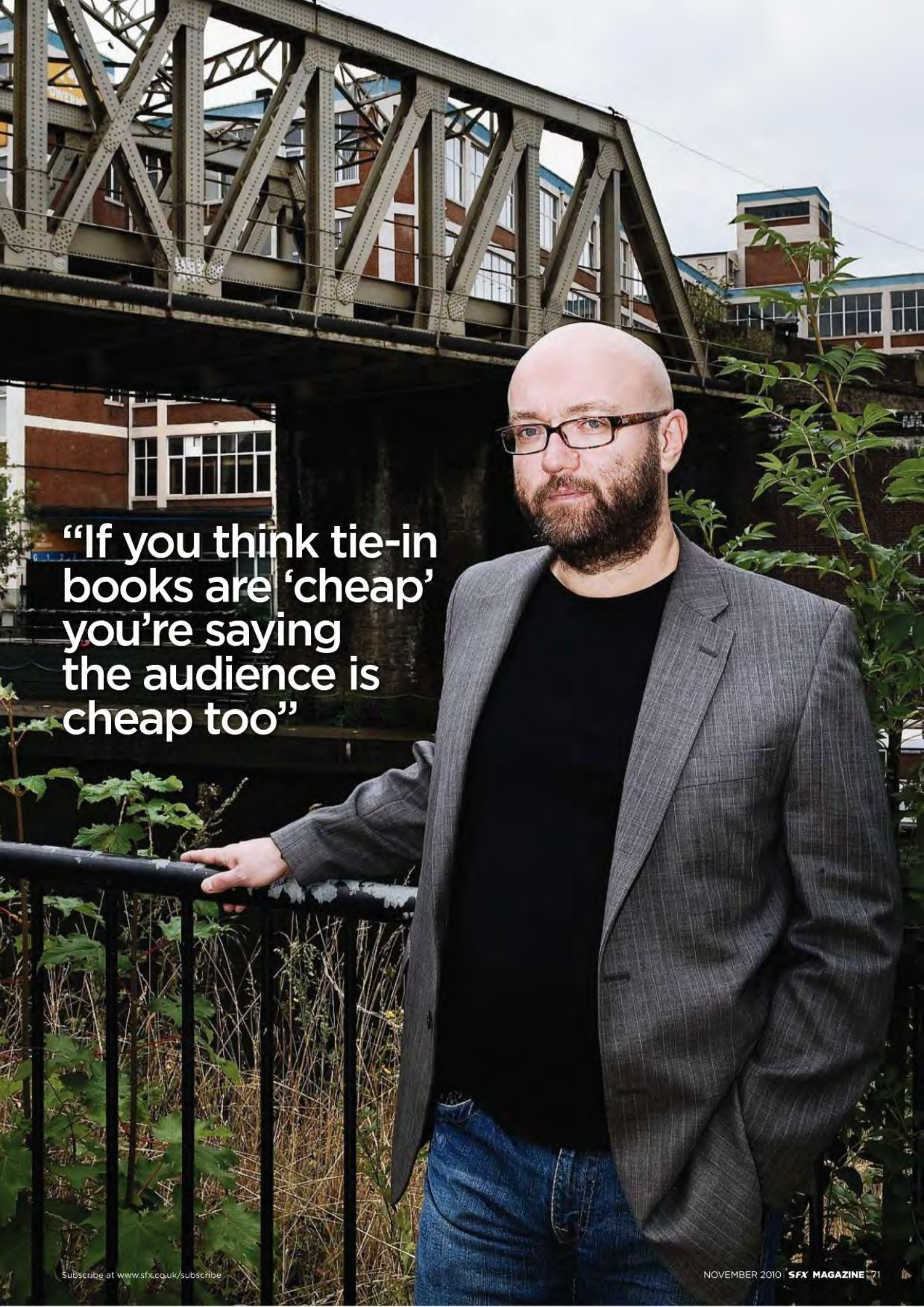


"If you think tie-in books are 'cheap' you're saying the audience is cheap too"

SFX EXCLUSIVE! Top artist interview

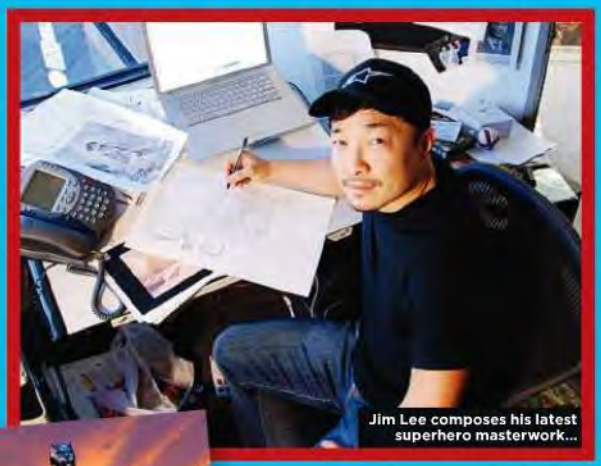
MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE

The world's leading superhero artist, Jim Lee, tells Rob Williams why it's much more fun than psychology

You don't get many better comics industry curricula vitae than Jim Lee's – to the point where the man who helped *X-Men* #1 sell a world-record eight million copies in 1991 can now be seen as a living embodiment of the American dream.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Lee's parents emigrated to the States and hoped their son would become a doctor. Sure enough, he enrolled on a psychology degree at one of America's top universities, Princeton, but found himself wanting to draw the comic book characters he loved. Fast forward 23 years and Lee has, in that time, formed Image Comics, sold his Wildstorm comics company to DC and cemented his position as one of the most popular artists in American comics with books such as *WildC.A.T.S* and *Batman: Hush*. In February 2010 he was appointed co-publisher of DC Comics, the man charged with taking characters like Superman and Batman into the digital age.

He may have transcended the label "comic artist" – these days he's as much an international businessman – but the timely release of *Icons*, a gorgeous hardback oversized collection of his finest work for DC, reminds us that this is still one of the great superhero artists of modern times.



Jim Lee composes his latest superhero masterwork...

...and here are some he did earlier: *Icons* collects Lee's finest.

What appealed to you about the DC co-publisher job? Aside from the pay cheque?

» I don't know if I should fess up to this but I'm not actually paid that differently to what I was before [laughs]. Part of the appeal of co-publishing – and I hope this doesn't sound too clichéd – is making a difference at America's oldest comic book publisher, and getting to steer the ship of these iconic world famous characters, and not just in print, but going forward in the digital form, in games and other media. It is one of those once-in-a-lifetime opportunities.

Why do you think they offered you the job?

» The creative name I have and the clout I have because of the work I've done, the fans I have in comics. I ran a comic book company myself when Wildstorm was part of Image Comics. I'm entrepreneurial, starting up Image Comics with my other partners. I have a lot of experience managing brands and IP and characters in other media besides print. I've been working on the DC Online game for about five years, been involved in a couple of other videogame projects, movie deals, things like that. I guess they liked that combination.

And *DC Universe Online*, the MMORPG, is finally being released.

» Yeah, we finally announced a release date, which is a first after five years, which is 2 November 2010. Having been with this project since day one it's actually kind of surreal to put a date to the project, but it's very exciting, coming down to the wire, and the game's coalescing at an incredible rate.

This is something Marvel don't have.

» They had a couple of false starts with their MMO. They've got one that is more kid-based coming out in the future. Ours will definitely be one of a kind. There's other superhero MMOs out there but this is the first one that's based on a world-renowned brand, the DC Universe.

Do you think that beating Marvel is DC's primary focus?

» Yeah, I would say regardless of who our competition is we would want… to defeat them [laughs]. We're competitive. I think that's healthy for the industry and the fans. And we have this amazing advantage because we're part of Warner Brothers and they have one of the biggest film companies in the world, television groups, animation groups. »

Portrait © Eddy Choi

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Happy days: Dick Grayson as part of The Flying Graysons act before he became Robin.

"IT'S A UNIQUE CHALLENGE IN OUR BUSINESS TO TAKE DECADES-OLD CHARACTERS AND KEEP THEM HAPPENING AND CONTEMPORARY"

What's the main thing DC have in the works that most excites you?

» Well, this year is the first year of DC Entertainment, with the new executive team. It's also our 75th anniversary, and we have some pretty kickass storylines that we're about to promote coming up via J Michael Straczynski. It's a unique challenge in our business to take decades-old characters and keep them young and happening and contemporary and that's exactly what he's doing with those characters.

Does the co-publisher job mean that you won't be drawing for the foreseeable future?

» In the short term, yes, in the long term, I've got *Dark Knight: Boy Wonder* coming out next February with Frank Miller, the second half of our *All Star Batman & Robin* storyline that we started years ago, I've got a new book called *Icons: The Art Of Jim Lee* that's out, and that has a new ten-page Legionnaires story that I did with writer Paul Levitz.

The cover says "Icon" in big letters. That's a nice ego boost.

» I just wanted to put "random sketches by Jim Lee" [laughs]. But it's extremely flattering and at the same time it makes you feel incredibly old. It's a retrospective of the work I've done when I've been here at Wildstorm/DC. I've gone through the proofs and it's a really handsome project. It's amazing, if you take a lot of art, put it next to each other and print it large and oversize, it can look really classy.

Batman experiences a little Supes jealousy in this Lee sketch.

Looking back, you were a pre-medical student at Princeton, then you decided to try and become a comic artist. How did that go down with your parents?

» They wanted to knock me down, ship me back to Korea to reprogram me [laughs]. My parents grew up in the Korean War, they were teenagers there, they fled Korea for a life of stability and safety for their children, and worked very, very hard to put me through prep school and one of the finest universities in America… and I turn around and stab them in the back and say I want to draw comic books! But, after many a long and protracted emotional battle, once I got work at Marvel, they were very, very happy for me. They were big fans and supporters of mine once they realised there are other ways to make a living in America other than becoming a doctor. *Dark Knight Returns* came out in 1986, the year I graduated. It was a different format, slicker paper, and most importantly a very sophisticated, darker kind of story I'd never really read before,

Superman and Wonder Woman have a bruising tête-à-tête in 2004.

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Batman before and after the full-colour treatment.

LEAVING X-MEN BEHIND

He'd just sold shedloads of comics with *X-Men* #1 when, in 1991, Lee and five other top artists walked out on Marvel to form Image Comics...

"It didn't go over well," he laughs. "Marvel was a newly public company so their stock lost $80 million, $100 million in a day. So there was a bit of panic because we walked in a very public way. A lot of sabre rattling – 'You'll never work here ever again!' A lot of hurt feelings. When you work with an editor on a book you develop a friendship with them, and all of a sudden you're 'backstabbing' them by leaving? How dare you? Well, I'm pretty sure I own my career, I'm pretty sure we mutually benefited from our work together, rather than you giving me a break. We helped you sell gobs of issues of *X-Men* and *Spider-Man*. It was business.

"They were still of this very old school mentality where the company was king, the talent worked for the company. And we were the generation that said, 'No, the talent is just as important, if not more important, and we're going to show you how important.'"

Batman races into a not quite fully formed bat garage in *Hush*.

and that completely inspired me to drop everything and try and get into comics. Four months later I was able to get in. I haven't looked back since.

How did you get your first job in comics?

» I flew from St Louis to a convention in New York and I showed my work to an editor. He liked it and invited me into the Marvel offices and he gave me a try-out. I did a seven-page short story. Very, very stressful. They gave me two weeks to do it but I had to make this deadline. Then they gave me a full-length fill-in issue and I did that, and then it snowballed from there. My first full issue was #51 of *Alpha Flight*, 1987.

Was there a point where you realised your career was really taking off?

» The first issue of *Uncanny X-Men* of my run, #268, which had Captain America, Black Widow and Wolverine. A lot of people liked that because of the mix of characters. They were some of my favourite characters, so I had a lot of enthusiasm drawing those pages, and that translated well and the fans really responded to that storyline, seeing those characters drawn by me. But I don't think that was any better drawn than any other issue of *X-Men*. It was the same thing with *Batman: Hush*. People love the character of Batman and this incredible rogues' gallery and the storyline was tailored to showcase my ability to draw his rogues' gallery. That really hit a chord with the fans. I don't think that was any better drawn than *Superman: For Tomorrow* [the series Lee did after *Hush* with Brian Azzarello] but fans really responded to *Hush*.

Why do you think your work has been so popular for so long?

» When you think about your style, you can take it apart to nuts and bolts but you can't hand those nuts and bolts to someone else and them have the same level of success. There's an X-factor to it all that cannot be taught or translated, but certainly I can talk about camera angles, and gestures and body language, negative space and storytelling. But you talk to fans about "What do you like about my work?" and they'll say, "You draw hot women!" Very rarely do I hear, "I love the way you tell stories with your pictures". **SFX**

Icons: The DC Comics And WildStorm Art Of Jim Lee *is released in October from Titan Books (www.titanbooks.com).*

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Lis and Katy pose together, on the day of the read-through.

Sarah Jane Smith is back, and this time she's teaming up with another classic companion... and the Eleventh Doctor! Ian Berriman reports

Not your Average Jo

The date is 19 April 2010, and Britain is under a cloud – a cloud of volcanic ash, drifting in from Iceland. Remember that? It's all brightness and light at Upper Boat studios, home of *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, though, and much of it's radiating from two much-loved *Doctor Who* actresses. *SFX* is here for a read-through of a script which not only sees Sarah Jane (Lis Sladen) meet Matt Smith's Doctor but, just as excitingly, sees the return of Jon Pertwee-era companion Jo Grant to our screens after a 37-year gap. As Katy Manning (resplendent in denim dress, red scarf and towering heels) and Lis (Cheshire Cat t-shirt!) share a hug, your correspondent gulps at witnessing a moment of *Who* history. It's a shame Matt Smith couldn't share it – flights grounded, he's stranded in the US.

"Death Of The Doctor" is the title of this third of six two-parters in *SJA*'s fourth series. Ponder that title and the presence of the Shansheeth – vulture-like intergalactic *undertakers* – and you can probably guess what brings together two of the Doctor's former companions in a secret UNIT base underneath Mount Snowdon...

Once the reading gets underway, we discover it's a great script, both moving and uproariously funny. There are echoes of Sarah Jane's return in 2006 *Who* "School Reunion", and treats aplenty for old-school fans, with mentions of everything from Artron

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energy to the planet Karfel. As for Jo, the 2010 model is grown up, but certainly not grown old, a hippy nomad who's spent her life battling injustice in her own way. Afterwards, we ask Katy Manning how it feels to be back.

"When I walked in I was *nervous as*..." she confesses. "Then everybody was so very lovely, and made me feel very welcome. And when I was reading the script and I got to that scene with the Doctor, even in just a read-through where everybody's sitting around, I felt that me nose started to run!

"I've been so homesick for so many years," explains Manning, who recently returned to the UK after many years spent living in Australia, "and I don't think that anything nicer could have been offered to me. It's the best gift anybody could give somebody!"

THE CREATOR RETURNS

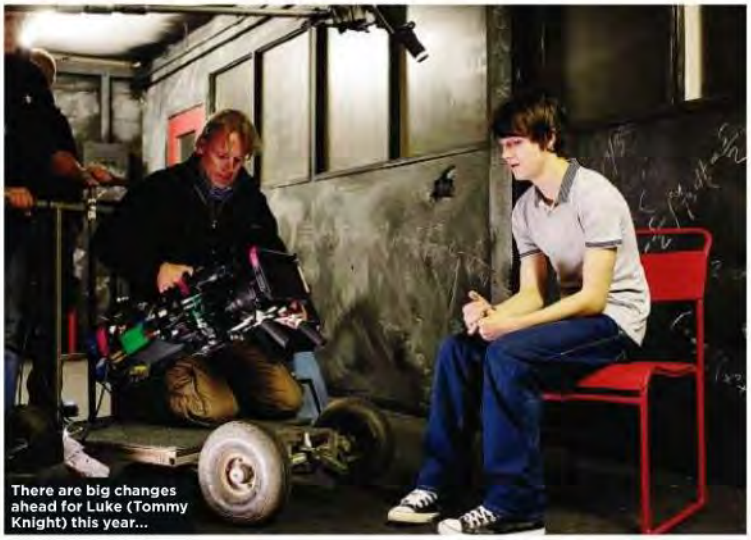
The man who wrapped that gift is the show's creator, Russell T Davies. We catch up with him several months later, once the episodes are in the can, and ask how he went about bringing back Jo.

"For the first time ever, I went and watched old stuff," Davies confesses. "We used to bring back monsters and I didn't actually go and watch the old tapes, partly because I think the way you remember them is just as powerful as what they actually were. But I did go back and watch the end of 'The Green Death' [Jo Grant's final story]. And I think it's really important to preserve the absolute beauty of what [producer] Barry Letts and [script editor] Terrance Dicks did there."

Back in 1973, Jo left the Doctor to marry idealistic ecologist Professor Jones, joining him on a trip up the Amazon in search of a fungus that could end world hunger. In spin-off adventures, her life took a different path, but Davies was determined to remain faithful to her TV last hurrah.

"We talked about it a lot beforehand," says Davies. "I know there's a feeling that she'd have got divorced, and there was a theory that she'd be living on her own in Wales in a little cottage – some of the novels did this – and you think, 'Nice idea, but actually that's absolutely betraying the way we left her'. We left her with the promise of happiness, of adventure, of love and joy, and you can't be cynical and undercut that by saying, 'Oh, she's a drug addict now! Her husband left her, she's lonely, her life is bitter'. That's just *interfering* with classic *Doctor Who* and rewriting what we were promised. So I was absolutely strict about that. I wasn't supposed to write this story first of all – Phil Ford »

In 1973's "The Green Death", Jo left to marry Professor Jones.


There are big changes ahead for Luke (Tommy Knight) this year...

was. So when we were setting it up I said, 'You cannot make this a cynical story, and you cannot reduce her character by getting this adult draft undercutting all the beautiful memories that she left us with.' So I think I've honoured the past and got it right."

People can change a lot over the course of 37 years, of course. So how did they go about deciding how Jo would have changed, and what qualities must be retained?

"Well, Katy Manning is absolutely marvellous in it," says Davies. "What's so lovely about her performance is that absolute lack of cynicism – there's a real bright, sparky optimism. There are some scenes that are quite sad, and one or two lines you could play as bitter or slightly angry, and she never plays it like that; she plays it with a smile every time, and a really forgiving heart. The fact that the Doctor hasn't seen her again in all these years doesn't make her pissed off. It's lovely – there is a genuine innocence and wide-eyedness. And of course, Jo's someone who's travelled. She went off to live in the Amazon – not many people do that! She has to have got a certain amount of perspective from that – she's seen amazing things that most of us never will. You can travel in the TARDIS with the Doctor and see different planets but Jo, *on Earth*, has seen more amazing things than possibly any of the Doctor's other companions have."

"No-one will possibly spot us if we hide behind these barrels!"

Hang on, why isn't Luke in school uniform? Is he bunking off?

The episode with the mysterious floating arm is particularly chilling.

"It's the best gift anybody could give somebody" Katy Manning

Katy's entrance is classic Jo. She enters babbling good-naturedly, tripping over, and dropping a vase full of flowers.

"Well, that's famously supposed to be the way that Katy Manning auditioned – she'd forgotten her glasses and she walked in, fell over and Barry Letts said, 'Oh my god, that's the girl!' So it's riffing off that. There's all sorts of memories built into it – not just Jo Grant memories, but *Doctor Who* mythology memories of what people are like. As a fan, you inherit a lot of Katy Manning as well, so there are lines about her wearing glasses because of her famous short-sightedness and that sort of clumsiness, and that's actually Katy, not Jo."

As a *Who* fan himself, how does it feel to see these two immensely popular companions meet for the first time?

"The funny thing is, when you see Jo Grant and Sarah Jane Smith in the same scene together it's weird, because it's not as shocking as I thought it would be!" Davies admits. "I thought that'd be a real culture shock, like two eras meeting, and as a fanboy my hairs would be standing on end. But actually you watch it and it just feels *right*. Even though I know the history of *Doctor Who* very well, I sit there going, 'Good lord, have they not met before?' Then you see the two of them sitting with Matt Smith, and it all seems completely natural. And you think, 'What a good, open and reflexive mythology this is – it really absorbs anything."

WHAT ABOUT WHO?

This story also sees the former *Who* showrunner writing for the Eleventh Doctor. When Davies ruled out writing more scripts for the series, we never thought we'd see that happen.

"I know!" chuckles Davies, clearly fearful our line of questioning is heading somewhere painfully obvious... "I wasn't meant to write this story, and when they phoned and said, 'You've got to write it,' literally the first thing I said was, 'I refuse to be interviewed and asked what's the difference between writing for David Tennant and Matt Smith! I refuse!'"

Er, we didn't ask, actually! But now you bring it up, what's the answer?

"What I did was take all my old lines of dialogue from David Tennant, and I cut them up, on laminated paper, and made them like those poetry

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Exploding Slitheen? Mushy pea mishap? Or just a really bad cold?

"I think I've honoured the past and got it right"
Russell T Davies

fridge magnets! Then I took all David Tennant's words and stuck them on the fridge, and I rearranged them so Matt Smith never says a word that David Tennant didn't say – oh, except I took two lines of Patrick Troughton from 'Tomb Of The Cybermen' to jazz it up a bit! So that's how I wrote it, just desperately parasiting off the past!"

Okay – ask a stupid question, get a stupid answer. But writing for the Doctor one more time must have felt a *bit* weird, surely?

"Thing is, it didn't really feel like writing proper *Doctor Who*. Also, I invented *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, and I haven't had a chance to write it since the pilot, and it's so nice to get a chance to. I loved writing for Clyde and Rani, and there's a really nice couple of scenes for Rani's dad, Haresh, in there that balance Haresh a bit and give him a bit of wisdom, which I think is a little bit lacking sometimes. So it's my chance to do a little bit of fine-tuning, and I really loved that. I'm so glad we did this. I'm so pleased with it, I can't begin to tell you!" SFX

The Sarah Jane Adventures *series four starts on BBC One in the week commencing 11 October. "Death Of The Doctor" airs in the week commencing 25 October. Set the Sky+ now, eh!*

"I WAS IN THE PRESENCE OF DOCTOR WHO ROYALTY!"
Matt Smith talks *SJA*

How does the Doctor get involved with Sarah Jane and Jo?
» There are rumours of the Doctor's demise, which obviously cause Sarah Jane a great deal of concern and an understandable need to try and help by rushing to his side. Even if it may be a trap... It's drama on a grand scale, with some tense scenes inside a secret base beneath Mount Snowdon. We see the involvement of a formidable set of vulture aliens, the Shansheeth. They are known as galactic coffin bearers, so make of their presence what you will!

How did you feel about taking the Doctor into one of *Who*'s sister shows?
» Very excited! Even more so when I knew that Russell T Davies would be penning the episodes. I filmed *The Sarah Jane Adventures* after a period of time away from playing the Doctor and I'd really missed him. So going back to the role was fantastic.

Does it give you particular pleasure to have filmed a programme aimed primarily at children?
» It does, because I think youngsters get a particular kick out of *Doctor Who*. They're the members of the audience who really believe what they are seeing, who literally watch episodes open-mouthed! I've got a picture on my phone of a couple of youngsters, children of somebody closely involved with *Doctor Who*, hiding behind a sofa while watching an episode. And that's the classic child's response to the programme – has been for generations!

You're not only starring with long-time *Doctor Who* icon Lis Sladen but Katy Manning as well. Was that daunting?
» Well, I did feel I was in the presence of *Doctor Who* royalty! Both they, and their characters, go back a long way, and occasionally I'd be reminded of the show's long and glorious past. There's a scene where Sarah Jane makes reference to being stuck in a ventilation shaft, as she was during an adventure with a previous incarnation of the Doctor, and my character says, 'That takes me back – or maybe it takes me forward!' You never lose sight of the fact that you're part of a programme which has been around for a very long time and will doubtless go on for a very long time in the future, long after I've stopped playing the Doctor. Tim Oglethorpe

ONE SMALL STEP

Richard Edwards takes a trip to the Moon to find it populated by types from BBC drama

We have to admit we haven't really dressed for the occasion. While Neil Armstrong and the other 11 astronauts who walked on the Moon went kitted out in state-of-the-art spacesuits, here we are on the lunar surface clothed in just a bog standard coat, jeans and trainers. Just when we're starting to worry about the vacuum sucking the air from our lungs, however, comes the comforting sight of The League Of Gentlemen's Mark Gatiss dressed in Edwardian breeches, sporting facial hair that wouldn't look out of place on Spinal Tap bassist Derek Smalls, and completely unfazed by the fact he's casually walking about on the Earth's nearest neighbour without oxygen.

If this doesn't quite sound like the Moon of your school science textbooks, that's because this is outer space as seen through the eyes of HG Wells in his 1901 novel *The First Men In The Moon*. His is a lunar landscape with a breathable atmosphere and a maze of underground tunnels that the satellite's indigenous population, the Selenites, call home. It's the world found by genius scientist Professor Cavor (Gatiss) and his financially motivated companion Bedford (Rory Kinnear) when they set off for space in a space-faring sphere coated in the scientist's prototype gravity-proof substance, Cavorite – a giant leap for mankind some 60 years before Armstrong took it for us.

"You have Cavor whose main aim is the advancement of scientific knowledge – his only aspiration is to become a member of the Royal Society – whereas Bedford is a failed businessman who can see an opportunity at every moment," says *The First Men In The Moon* director (and Gatiss's producing partner) Damon Thomas on the 90-minute drama's Pinewood set. "Once Cavor encourages him to see there might be diamonds on the Moon he sees it as an opportunity. I suppose the analogy is the atom bomb. People thought we could split the atom – fantastic! – and then someone said you could destroy the world with it. Cavor invents Cavorite, doesn't see any practical applications, and then you have Bedford saying it could revolutionise the world."

The lunar adventure brings the opposite personalities of the two men to the fore, and in the process reveals two sides of humanity – Wells was clever like that. So while Cavor goes armed with a Prime Directive-ish, "we come in peace" ethos, Bedford's attitude towards the native population is a little more, well, violent.

"I think it's interesting that on the surface they might represent the two sides of human nature, but actually they're both more complex than that," explains Gatiss, who also adapted the novel for TV. "Cavor isn't just an angel and Bedford isn't just a brute, but between them they manage to fuck it up. I think that's quite interesting, because

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Bedford wouldn't have got there if it wasn't for Cavor's invention. There's a lot of comment in there about science."

MOON LIFE

Even though science has moved on light years since Wells wrote the book – we're pretty sure there isn't intelligent life on the Moon – and the entire world knows what the Moon looks like, Gatiss reckons turning the century-old novel into a 2010 TV drama wasn't a problem. Indeed, the fact that the Selenites can now be created in CG (the 1964 Lionel Jeffries-starring movie used a mixture of brilliant Ray Harryhausen stop-motion effects and, er, children in suits) was a definite advantage.

"It was fantastic to adapt, because it's a brilliantly written story," he says. "I've just done a *Poirot*. It was one of the last ones Agatha Christie wrote in the late '60s and it's got a great murder and a great idea, but it's a mess and it was terribly, terribly hard to make something of it. *First Men In The Moon* is a brilliant book and really it was just about – unfortunately – working out what we had to lose just in terms of scale to make it feasible, and really making the dialogue more funny and sayable. Also, I had the idea of bookending it with the real Moon landings, so it starts at a village fete in 1969 with a little boy wandering into a tent and finding a 90-year-old Bedford who tells him the story and that's how it starts."

With all the hype that surrounded last year's 40th anniversary of NASA's Apollo 11 mission, it seems that Gatiss is well and truly bitten by the lunar bug. "It's funny, when it was the actual anniversary I thought we should have done this last year, it would have been perfect timing, but actually there was so much coverage I thought this might get lost and that it would be nice to have a bit of distance," he says. "I've been watching everything Moon-related since, and I've become quite passionate about punching out deniers, because I think it is the most extraordinary thing we've ever done as a race. It's horrible to think that if you Google it the first 20 million things are about faking it.

"There's obviously big political questions about the money and things because it was an arms race that generated it, but in terms of the incredible spirit of adventure and achievement and teamwork, a million people involved or something like that, it's just breathtaking." It's a shame, then, that a future of space travel for all has never come to pass. "It's that strange thing like Concorde, that now we live in a subsonic age and Concorde's gone – we went to the Moon and we haven't been for 40 years. Progress is meant to go forwards, and actually we've come back." As we stare longingly across that barren lunar landscape, we can't help but agree. SFX

The First Men In The Moon *will air on BBC Four in late October.*

"I've become quite passionate about punching out Moon landing deniers"

BEDFORD RASCAL

Rory Kinnear on playing the bad side of humanity

What was your starting point for playing Bedford, a character who's often not very likeable?
I guess the main thing was to understand what was his drive to actually accept this lunatic offer of Cavor's. Obviously he's told before he goes that there might possibly be minerals and of course as soon as he arrives he sees a planet full of gold, which is better than any of his expectations, but I guess understanding why he feels driven by such greed was the starting point for creating the character.

Did you sympathise with him?
You have to understand where he's coming from and what he's doing it for, and a sense of him trying to justify himself by trying to prove to someone else that he's worth something, albeit in a way that we might consider cavalier or capitalistic – it's the only way that he knows. There's a sense that he has this great self-confidence but he doesn't seem to have backed it up with any actions. It's almost as if he's trying to prove himself to someone – there's something in his make up that means he has to prove himself commercially.

What was it like wearing the prosthetic to play Bedford as an old man?
I'd had an actor friend who'd had a panic attack when he was [wearing a prosthetic] and they had to tear him out of it, so that was the only knowledge I had of it, but as it went on I absolutely loved it. It was complete sensory deprivation and then once they've put it on it has this heavy weight, and there's a hump on your back as well, so it automatically made you tortoise like. I wore it the whole day and got more and more into the character and really into the posture.

(1) Geraint Lewis/Rex Features

Stephen La Rivière gives one of Blighty's finest ever TV series some generous amour

20 Reasons Why We The Avengers

"Mrs Peel – 50 years on, you're still needed!"

Despite being the epitome of '60s cool, it seems inconceivable that *The Avengers* (and the 1960s, for that matter) began half a century ago. Starting out in the murky world of serial thrillers, *The Avengers* began with Dr David Keel avenging the death of his fiancée, accompanied by spy John Steed. Soon, the fiancée – and Keel himself – were forgotten, and *The Avengers* rapidly developed from conventional drama into a kooky, stylish fantasy where villains called Needle live in haystacks, try to control the world with dry rot and revel in tying up leather-clad heroines.

On the eve of its 50th anniversary, the series seems to be as popular as ever, with every surviving episode arriving on remastered DVD. To help *SFX* mark the event, a diabolical mastermind tied us to a track in the path of a train equipped with a fiendish circular saw, being driven by a clown. He wanted us to name our top 20 reasons for loving *The Avengers* before the piano music stopped. Fortunately for us, it wasn't that difficult...

1 HAVE THEY? HAVEN'T THEY?

Emma: Our relationship hasn't been exactly domestic – has it?

Whilst not a feature of the show's first year (we're pretty sure Steed and Keel's relationship was platonic...), a big part of the joy of *The Avengers* is the sparky and moderately titillating interplay between Steed and his leading ladies. Mrs Gale always seemed a bit

Images © Getty (1), The Aquarius Collection (2)

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Patrick Macnee as John Steed and Diana Rigg as Emma Peel.

3 JOHN STEED / PATRICK MACNEE

Cathy: Do you always take your calls in a lingerie department?
Steed: If humanly possible.
Quite simply, there would be no *The Avengers* without John Steed – a man of such class that he makes James Bond look like a prole whose tailors might be Primark of Woolwich. He's the immaculately dressed, suave, sophisticated gentleman, with excellent poise when it comes to despatching cunning masterminds with his trusty brolly, and equipped with a fine line in champagne. A vote for John Steed, though, is also a vote for the sublime Patrick Macnee, whom, with that mischievous glint in his eye, you can't help feeling isn't that far removed from Mr Steed in real life.

4 THE TITLES

Specifically, the Emma Peel titles that came with a burst of colour in 1967. Remember those suggestive glances, the outrageous visual double-entendre of the popping of Steed's champagne cork and those rather funky karate-esque silhouettes. It's so stylish, in fact, that we're even prepared to overlook the American-appeasing spelling of "color".

5 THE BANTER

Even from its earliest days, *The Avengers* was full of neat one-liners, and this quip, from "Death At Bargain Prices", is among the most memorable:

Steed (in a department store): "I asked the Chief Predator where to find you and he said, 'Our Mrs Peel is in Ladies' Underwear.' I rattled up the stairs three at a time."

6 KINKY BOOTS

The 1963 single, that is. We don't care that Macnee and Blackman seem to be incapable of holding a tune, or that "sexy little schoolgirls" is a lyric second only to Peter Wyngarde's long-buried song "Rape" for sheer inappropriateness – we love the whole vibe of the piece, which really captures the risqué innocence of *The Avengers*. Its oft-forgotten B-side, Let's Keep It Friendly, provides us with the tantalising idea that Mrs Gale isn't a complete cold fish when she huskily intones, "Well, let's *pretend* to keep it nice and friendly, my friend..." »

frosty, apparently preferring philately to philandering, but Mrs Peel was the right combination of independent, attractive, charming and naughty, which made for the perfect relationship in all senses. As for Tara... Well, she was a bit too young, really.

2 MARTIAL ARTS

Although the male ego dictates that he should never be physically defeated by a woman, there are few men who would mind being tossed by Cathy, Emma or Tara. *The Avengers* featured various styles, including karate, kung-fu and judo. Plaudits must go to Honor Blackman, who performed all her own fight scenes in real-time on a concrete studio floor. She also wrote her own book on self-defence, which includes this sage advice: "Waist hip throw: This will somersault him through the air, on to the ground, and possibly through the doors of the Casualty department."

Followers of Sacher-Masoch groan: "Now *that's* sexy."

Honor Blackman wasn't opposed to a little rough and tumble...

Disappointingly, not a supplier of catsuits.

Honor Blackman brought glamour, fun – and leather – to the show.

7 ACRONYMS

Are you a SNOB (Sociability, Nobility Omnipotence, Breeding)? Ever visited CUPID (Cabinet, Underground, Premises In Depth)? Do you know where MAUD (Microfilm And Uncyphered Document) has GONN (Guild Of Noble Nannies)? Maybe you PURRR (Philanthropic Union for the Rescue, Relief, Recuperation of cats)? Would you like to see the BBC (British Burial Caskets) abolished? Or do you consider it a great British icon like BIG BEN (Bilateral Infiltration of Great Britain, Europe and North America)? *The Avengers* is full of acronyms. That's it in a NUTSHELL (thermoNuclear Underground Target zone SHELIter).

8 THE TAG SCENES

As if there wasn't enough opportunity for suggestiveness in the course of an episode, the tag-scenes - appended like brilliant irrelevances - give a little glimpse into the relaxing life of John Steed and his partners-in-anti-crime after a strenuous day frustrating the forces of evil. "I'll tell you what I have in mind," grins Steed as he sails off into the sunset with Mrs Peel...

9 EMMA PEEL / DIANA RIGG

With no disrespect intended towards the show's other fine ladies, Emma Peel is the perfect *Avengers* girl. While it would have been all too easy for her to be sidelined by her long-running co-star, Diana Rigg ensures that Mrs Peel is equal to her male partner, as any *Avengers* girl should be. Mrs Peel is the right combination of intelligent, sexy and sassy, with just a tinge of vulnerability, which, combined with her elegant fighting prowess, makes for a terrific on-screen relationship. As the old cliché goes, women wanted to *be* her and men wanted to be *with* her. Just watch out for her mean right hook, though.

10 THE MUSIC

Not the original Johnny Dankworth incidentals, which sometimes sound as though an irate chef has launched his kitchen utensils down a flight of stairs, but the smooth Laurie Johnson version that made its debut appearance with Diana Rigg's first episode. Johnson managed to nail the entire flavour of the series with his composition, which succeeds in being both dynamic and elegant. It's really QQF (Quite, Quite Fantastic).

11 CYBERNAUTS

They move in the dark, leave no mark and are as hard as steel; deadly robot killers that despatch victims with a fictitious karate blow called "jinkhu" – a strike that breaks the neck more easily than a hangman's noose. The Cybernauts are strangely effective – watching them close in on Mrs Peel in their first episode makes for particularly gripping viewing. In true *Avengers* form, though, their most memorable quality is an idiosyncratic one – a "curious, whip-like" sound made by their ferocious karate chop!

12 THE *AVENGERS?*

Truth be told, once Dr Keel has seen retribution meted out for the murder of his fiancée, Steed and his partners don't actually do much "avenging". It seems appropriate at this point to quote the late Sydney Newman, one of the show's creators, who said: "I don't know what it means, but it's a hell of a good title!" We're inclined to agree with him...

13 MOTHER

A late edition to proceedings, Mother imbues everything that's wacky about the final episodes of the series. Portly, moustachioed Patrick Newell, with his gender-bending codename "Mother", creates as much amusement as the many

A Cybernaut prepares to execute a deadly jinkhu blow.

Mother knows best – Patrick Newell oversees Steed's operations.

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Twiggy and *The Avengers*? The '60s don't get any better than this!

A lab coat and a sneer – sure signs of a rotter at work.

Mrs Peel drove audiences wild with her sporty Lotus Elan.

Captain Darling jokes did years later in *Blackadder*. It's an image that is made even more surreal by the character's appearance in all manner of odd places, including on an inflatable chair in the middle of a swimming pool. Many shows tried the surreal, but few succeeded as *The Avengers* did. All together now: "Pump, Rhonda, pump! I'm taking on a starboard list!"

14 THE NEW AVENGERS

The Avengers fitted uncomfortably into the 1970s, when kipper ties, polyester shirts and an extensive list of other heinous crimes abounded. Fortunately, Joanna Lumley as high-kicking Purdey exudes enough suave loveliness by herself to counterbalance the sartorial eyesores, and the stories themselves are frequently rather good. Just don't mention the pillage of the original series that occurs when Steed calls Emma (courtesy of some recycled footage from the '60s and a Diana Rigg impersonator) and she states rather sharply, "I've changed my name. I'm not Mrs Peel any more."

15 THE FASHION

In 1966 there was a showcase of fashions from the series. One can imagine John Steed strolling leisurely down the catwalk in his double-breasted, silken Pierre Cardin suit, gently tipping his bowler hat. Following him, Mrs Peel poses in her stretch-jersey Emmapeeler, designed to allow unrestricted grappling. Finally, Mrs Gale models the ultimate in *Avengers* apparel – a tight catsuit made of durable leather. Sadly though, Mrs Gale has probably had her outfit lead-lined to prevent intruders.

16 DIABOLICAL MASTERMINDS

Are you planning to destroy the world from a department store? Thinking of killing an old enemy with a life-sized board game? Maybe you're Father Christmas and you're keen to get into espionage. Have you built a race of killer robots, or cultivated a virus to make victims sneeze to death? If so, consider becoming a Diabolical Mastermind™. Make sure your heavies are good, though.

17 THE QUEEN OF SIN

"Now what are you like with the big boys?" snarls Peter Wyngarde, possibly referring to the show's sudden advance from coy winks to outright kinkiness. Set in a modern-day revival of "The Hellfire Club" (18th century meeting places for "persons of quality" who wanted to engage in immoral and orgiastic activities), "A Touch Of Brimstone" is infamous for Mrs Peel's "Queen Of Sin" costume – a corset complete with accessories (a snake and a whip)! The episode was banned in America, while Britain indulged in a little S&M, albeit with a slight trim to reduce the number of attempts to flagellate Mrs Peel. Apparently, this episode gained the highest viewing figures of the entire show. We can't imagine why.

18 VEHICLES

"Solid, elegant and classic" and "slick, sexy and stylish" describe not only Steed and his sidekicks, but their cars too. It seems strangely appropriate that Steed drives a demure 1920s Bentley, while the girls show that they're just as racey in their sports cars, especially Mrs Peel's Lotus Elan. We've even avoided the cheap "going for a ride with Emma" gag, proving that we're not completely immature.

19 AVENGERSLAND

Britain, Britain, Britain. A land formed of two great areas: London and the Home Counties. A place where old ladies roam the streets with machine guns and where honey is still for tea. Here, ducking stools are used by quaint villages and every man who isn't a Cockney wears a bowler hat. It's said that *The Avengers* is the most exported British series ever – a cunning PR plan by HM's government to stop the colonies invading?

20 THE '60S

In short, *The Avengers* is the 1960s. It embodies the style of the era, beginning with the hangover of the grim '50s, before bursting into the cheeky, sexy, liberated psychedelia of the new decade where everything was bright, a bit suggestive and just plain fab. It's hard to imagine *The Avengers* anywhere else, and we've got to admit, it's become what Steed might describe as "a fine vintage". SFX

Joanna Lumley lent an extra touch of class to *The New Avengers*.

"A Touch Of Brimstone" proved too hot for US audiences to handle.

We hope John Steed has good home contents insurance...

Images © Rex Features (4), Getty (1), The Aquarius Collection (1)

Jasika Nicole

Finding out more about *Fringe*'s mysterious Agent Astrid – both of them...

Words: **Tara Bennett** • Photography: ©**Fox**

Of the many mysteries swirling about the *Fringe* universe perhaps one of the most vexing for dedicated fans is how little we still know about FBI Agent Astrid Farnsworth. For two seasons, the ever-patient and whip-smart junior agent's been a fixture in Walter Bishop's Harvard lab, helping the eccentric scientist's transition back into his life after a 17-year stint in a mental institution. While Farnsworth has always been present for the case at hand, she's frustratingly remained second fiddle to the core *Fringe* team of Olivia (Anna Torv), Peter (Joshua Jackson) and Walter (John Noble).

Yet for up-and-coming actress Jasika Nicole, Astrid's limited face time has been far from a hardship... if maybe a little scary at times. "Yeah, she had a really slow build and there was a point in time where I thought maybe they were building her slowly because they didn't know if they wanted to keep her," Nicole shares impishly. "With every script I get I still take the PDF file and search for Astrid and I make sure she doesn't die. And *then* I start from page one and read the script. But I was patient just because look who I get to work with – John Noble. He is as wonderful off-camera as he is on-camera, and so I thought, 'This is great. No matter what it is I'm doing, this is like a masterclass and it's great to be working with people that you really respect.' But in season two they started showing Astrid more. She had the episode ['Snakehead'] with Walter in Chinatown that was amazing and so much fun for us to play. And now there are two of her," she smiles.

Nicole's patience has rewarded her with playing *two* different Astrids in *Fringe*'s third year. The season finale "Over There" revealed the alternate universe versions of all the major *Fringe* players including a very odd Alt Astrid that is the antithesis of the sweet Astrid fans know.

"She's a tricky one," the actress teases. "She doesn't make eye contact with anyone. She speaks towards them and she'll look towards them, but not when she's speaking. She also doesn't really respond to their facial expressions because she's not interested in that. She's only interested in relaying the information she has for them." Nicole shares that her performance was inspired by how her autistic sister communicates, which she found fascinating as they were growing up. "It's fun because it messes with people a little bit. People get uncomfortable when I do that."

Nicole says she's relishing the increased screen time, as the new season will flip-flop between episodes in each reality. "Alt Astrid is so incredibly different so it's like playing a completely different character. None of the characters she interacts with are the same; her Broyles is different, the Walter is different and there is a Charlie [Kirk Acevedo], and she didn't have a Charlie for a long time. It's kind of like doing a regional theatre show where you are doing several different shows at the same time."

Back in the normal universe, Nicole is thrilled to reveal that lab mates Walter and Astrid are finally bonding, maybe enough that Walter will finally remember her name. "The writers from the start are enhancing the relationship between Astrid and Walter because of the rift that's been created with his support system – with Olivia and Peter. Now they are acknowledging it," she says happily. "Before it was always understood that Astrid was just in the lab, and that Peter and Olivia were mad at something. Walter and Astrid talk about it now, which is really cool because I want them to have more conversations where she's not just being there and reading his mind and understanding what he needs. She's talking *to* him and he's asking her things. And he's probably more vulnerable than she's ever seen him before, which is really nice to see because John does that really well."

With such major changes for Astrid already in play, it begs the question of whether the character will get her own backstory episode this season. Nicole shrugs with a lack of knowledge, but admits she's hopeful this will be the year. "I heard a rumour from the DP [director of photography] last year who said they were formulating the Astrid episode for season three. Now I love the DP, so it's quite possible he was just saying that to flatter me. But I think that it's coming," she smiles.

And in the meantime, Nicole says there are already surprising morsels revealed about Astrid's private life early in season three. "You get to see her apartment," she says with excitement. "It's like a hippy den. She's got like eight rugs on the floor and all these lamps with rich colours. It looks like she probably has her own bong," she deadpans. "Seriously, if you get to see enough of it you'll think there's no way she's admonishing Walter for smoking his stuff because clearly she's a fan too." SFX

Fringe season three starts this month on Fox in America.

Biodata

- **OCCUPATION:** Actress
- **BORN:** Won't say!
- **FROM:** Birmingham, Alabama
- **GREATEST HITS:** *Take The Lead, She's Out Of My League, Law & Order: Criminal Intent*
- **RANDOM FACT:** Nicole is also an accomplished illustrator and has created a sequential art series called High Yella Magic (see www.jasikanicole.com).

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"I still search every script to make sure Astrid doesn't die"

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SFX HEROES AND INSPIRATIONS

SFX ACCESS! Comic book writer interview

Mark Millar

Mark Millar tells Calum Waddell about the things that inspired him to kick ass

As one of the UK's foremost comic book writers, Mark Millar has launched such successful properties as *Wanted* and *Kick-Ass* onto the big screen and continues to capture the attention of genre buffs thanks to the likes of *Civil War*, *Nemesis* and his new high-profile magazine launch, *CLiNT*. Now facing the temptation of a move to Hollywood from his native Scotland, he was happy to sit down with *SFX* at the Glasgow Film Festival to talk about the things that made him the man he is today.

Darker Dark Knight: Frank Miller changes the face of comics.

Stan Lee

"I suppose the most obvious influence for me is Stan Lee. Stan did it all. The things that we take for granted in comic books really came from him. As you probably know, superhero comics started in the 1930s in what we now refer to as the Golden Age and it was a cluster of people attempting to come up with rival titles and heroes. Then Stan came along, with artists such as Jack Kirby, and created an entire universe. You had Spider-Man, the Hulk, Daredevil, X-Men, Iron Man – all these things came from one guy and they all belonged to this one universe. I always thought of Stan as being JK Rowling, Ian Fleming and Robert Woodworth rolled into one. This is the guy who did it all. To me, he is bigger than Walt Disney for that reason. He is the cornerstone of comic books and the cornerstone of current Hollywood cinema too."

Above: Scissors hater Alan Moore.

Below: The Incredible Stan Lee.

Superman

"I love the original Superman movie and it was also one of the earliest comic books that I began collecting. I was involved in pitching a new Superman film for a little while but, sadly, nothing came of it – however, as a big fan of the character, I'm excited for whoever can get a new feature off the ground. I will be the first in line for it."

Alan Moore

"When a lot of my friends stopped reading comics, around about the age of 14 or so, I discovered the work of Alan Moore and it was just as I was getting bored with the same old rehashed Superman stories and stuff. So, by comparison, I thought Alan's stuff was massively sophisticated and exciting. To see something done as well as Alan Moore did *Marvelman*, and later *Watchmen*, was amazing. These books really changed the landscape of comics."

Frank Miller

"I tend to think of Alan Moore and Frank Miller as one person [laughs]. I would almost count them as one because I discovered them both at the same time and they seemed to be the only two guys out there taking things seriously. I remember reading *The Dark Knight Returns* and it was something unparalleled in cinema at the time because they just didn't have the ability to do effects like this. The superhero films that were around then were a bit hokey, such as *Superman III* and *Supergirl*. Even Burton's *Batman* had a touch of that. But there was none of that with Miller's work. Stan Lee started it for me but Miller and Moore continued it and I would probably have stopped reading comics, and be doing a different job right now, if it was not for them."

Smashing: Alan Moore's Rorschach.

Richard Donner

"When it comes to movies I tend to favour all those bearded 1970s directors that everyone loves [laughs]. However, the guy who has been the biggest inspiration to me in the film world is Richard Donner. One book of mine in particular – *Chosen* – is kind of a reverse play on his movie *The Omen*; only it's the story of the young Jesus growing up in the world instead of the Antichrist. I didn't realise until after I had written it that all I had done was swap around the central idea of Donner's movie! The other thing that Donner has always done well is verisimilitude – he brought realism to hokey subjects – be it The Book of Revelations in *The Omen* or a man who can fly in *Superman*."

Movie Soundtracks

"I am big soundtrack fan. I usually like peace and quiet when I'm working – and you will find that this is the same for most writers – but occasionally I will put on a bit of John Barry or some other classic film music."

AKA Books And Comics

"So no-one is going to know what this one is [laughs]. Basically, AKA Books And Comics is a store that opened up near me when I was 13 years old. It was the very first comic book store I ever went into and I was alerted to it by my English teacher, who saw me wearing a Superman badge. He read comics too, and he told me that one of his friends was opening up this store. It totally changed my life because, instead of being the one person who was secretly reading this stuff, I found other people with the same passion and it opened up an entirely new world. I mean, give me a comic book over a novel any day. I always think there are more ideas in one page of a comic than a novel." SFX

Christopher Reeve and Richard Donner plan how to make a fella fly.

Images © Kazam Media, John Sciulli, Geraint Lewis/Rex Features (3), BFI (1)

"IT'S ALL TRUE... EVERY WORD!"

Luke Dormehl details the hoaxes that made science fiction come true – just for a short while

Enfant terrible Orson Welles fools those dumbass Yanks!

On the night before Halloween, 1938, at the age of 23, Orson Welles – then a promising young talent working as an actor-producer-director – staged a radio version of the HG Wells sci-fi classic *The War Of The Worlds*. What followed has become legendary. Thousands of Americans tuning in midway through the broadcast believed the programme, composed of fake bulletins breaking news of a Martian invasion, to be real and fled their homes in panic.

"I had friends who ran out," recalled Welles, years later. "One of my favourite incidents was Jack Barrymore, who had a kennel of Great Dane dogs, and when he heard the news he ran out and undid all the kennels, and said, 'Fend for yourselves.'" "Radio Listeners in Panic, Taking War Drama as Fact... Many Flee Homes to Escape 'Gas Raid From Mars'" read the front page of *The New York Times* the following day. The very next year Welles was offered the best Hollywood contract deal in history, able to make the movies he wanted with complete artistic control. By perpetrating one of the biggest science fiction hoaxes in history he had turned himself from an up-and-comer with great potential into an international sensation. Had Welles been less stubborn (at least in the eyes of the studio) and chosen to go down the sci-fi blockbuster route and replicate his *War Of The Worlds* success we may have seen *Cloverfield* 70 years ahead of schedule.

Well known this story may be, but we begin with it because it perfectly illustrates what a huge deal a well-placed sci-fi hoax can be. Even here in 2010, the popularity of making people believe something that isn't true has never been less... well, popular. Today the sci-fi hoax has truly gone mainstream; whether it's in the "captured footage" look of a Hollywood blockbuster, as with the aforementioned *Cloverfield*, or being used as a clever marketing tool to create buzz around a new project. This latter capacity was used to director M Night Shyamalan's advantage when, in 2004, he agreed to take part in a documentary for the Sci-Fi Channel (that's your first clue right there!), entitled *The Buried Secret Of M Night Shyamalan*, which purported to reveal a secret from the filmmaker's past to explain his interest in the supernatural. Of course, the whole thing (which was widely reported in the press) turned out to be completely fictitious, and just a bit of wily promotion for his then-forthcoming flick *The Village* (which it was ultimately far better than, too). What can we say though? As *The Sixth Sense* shows, people love a good twist. »

That's either Bigfoot in northern California – or Richard Keys.

M Night Shyamalan's *Buried Secret* – surely a career high point...

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FAKE RADIO 'WAR' STIRS TERROR THROUGH U.S.
"War" Victim
"I Didn't Know"

The *Edinburgh Journal Of Science*'s Lunar Temple. Looks quite nice.

WHO HOAXES THE HOAXERS?

Orson Welles' *War Of The Worlds* broadcast may be one of the most famous early examples of the science fiction hoax, but it is by no means the only example – and nor was it the first. In August 1835, *The Sun*, a fledgling New York daily paper in its third year of publication, ran a story concerning the development of a new, immensely powerful telescope (complete with a "ponderous lens" weighing 14,826 lbs and a magnifying power of 42,000 times) which had discovered life on the Moon. Such was the success of the first story that the paper began to run an entire series of them – reprinted from the fictitious *Edinburgh Journal Of Science* – which detailed the discovery of a Lunar Temple, ancient volcanoes, a family of alien biped beavers, Moon sheep, giant bats and a creature that "would be classed on earth as a monster... bluish lead [colour], about the size of a goat, with a head and beard like him, and a single horn, slightly inclined forward from the perpendicular." Dishonest the news items may have been, but they also proved an efficient way of boosting the newspaper's circulation. By the time the story had played out the (once struggling) *Sun* had successfully increased its circulation to somewhere around 19,360 copies daily.

You would think that readers would have been outraged at being bilked out of their money when they finally found out that *The Sun* had been less than truthful in its news. Apparently not. While *The Sun* eventually sheepishly revealed the hoax, that didn't stop them running a story ten years later concerning a hot air balloon voyage across the Atlantic Ocean – written by none other than renowned science fiction (among other genres) author, Edgar Allan Poe.

The story concerning life on the Moon may have happened right at the birth of science fiction (it came scant years after George Tucker wrote *A Voyage To The Moon*, arguably the first such American story, and well over a hundred years before the term "sci-fi" was coined) but it contained many of the hallmarks that would come to define science fiction over the next 166 years: the fully realised worlds; the *Star Trek*-like science-babble to give it a grounding in reality; the lunar sheep... (er, perhaps not that last one). At its root it demonstrates the fine line which has always existed between science fiction and sci-fi hoax.

Almost 150 years after the Great Moon Hoax, Anglia Television got in on the act with a very special episode of their weekly science show: the imaginatively-named *Science Report*. The episode was intended as an April Fool's joke for 1977 and concerned the Earth's impending doom as a result of global warming, as well as the plans (already underway) to relocate a "Noah's Ark" representative slice of the planet's populace to Mars – via a brief stop on the Moon – as a result. The television station was bombarded with phone calls from the public, at which point they revealed that the whole thing was just a joke and that the episode was simply a one-off piece of fun. That didn't stop *Alternative 3* (as it was called) being published as a book the following year however.

CREATURE FEATURES

In late October 1967 two men – 41-year-old Roger Patterson and 36-year-old Robert Gimlin – travelled to the aptly named Bluff Creek in northern California, in hunt of Bigfoot. According to both men, they found him; even managing to snatch a few scant seconds of cine film of the legendary Sasquatch scampering away over the rocks. While the film has largely been decried as a hoax, Patterson passed away in 1972 without ever admitting as much, and several scientists have spoken out about elements of the film they believe would be difficult to fake. "I couldn't see the zipper and I still can't," was how John Napier, onetime director of the Smithsonian's Primate wing, put it. »

Alien autopsy alert! But not that dreadful Ant and Dec film.

Images: © Getty (2)

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WINNER - Jodie Gardiner (centre)

Competition Contributors: Lucie Pitcher, Mikey Gregorio, Larry Brangwyn & Matt Oakley
Fact: An Alien ChestBursting Simulator was constructed specifically for this photo
Favourite Movie: Empire Strikes Back (difficult choice: IT-O Interrogator droid required)

Mark Cox

Competition Contributor: Micheal Bender (Storm Trooper)
Fact: Mark got married to Sarah, On Tatooine in that T-shirt!
Favourite Movie: Empire Strikes Back

Bunnyspotting

Andy Bell

Competition Contributors: Maria Bell & A J Bradburn
Favourite Movies: Zulu & Return of the Jedi

Malc Foy and Clone

Competition Contributors: Himself & Himself
Occupation: A REAL LIFE CSI Photographer!
Favourite Movie: Raiders of the Lost Ark

Tom Webster

Competition Contributor: Chris Webster
Favourite Movie: A Nightmare on Elm Street

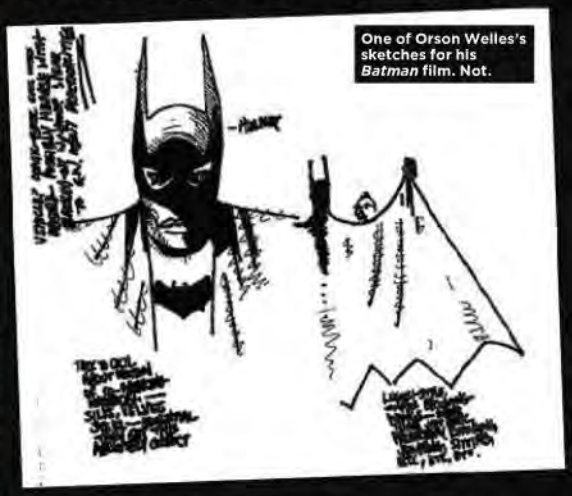
OK, no harm in using ONE movie star

"Infinite Sartorial Cool"
Simon Pegg

ITV's *Science Report* told Britain we were off to Mars. As if!

David Icke, who went from green baize to green lizards.

CITIZEN BRUCE



One of Orson Welles's sketches for his *Batman* film. Not.

We shouldn't have believed it. The fact that no-one had ever before discussed the fact that, at one point in 1946, Orson Welles had seriously considered directing an adaptation of *Batman* was next to impossible. And sadly that's exactly what it turned out to be: a hoax perpetrated by *Wanted* writer Mark Millar. Millar described how "A pal of mine called Lionel Hutton, a respected film historian, was given unprecedented access to the Welles estate as research for his upcoming biography and came across these startling facts in a pile of clippings and notes... The fact that Orson Welles was contemplating a *Batman* picture in 1946 is both glorious and fascinating to people like me, but embarrassing and crass to the Welles aficionados."

By mixing real facts (Welles was an avid reader of pulp novels) with fictitious but plausible quotes from an imagined 36-page treatment (with "Orson" describing "a cinematic experience, a kaleidoscope of heroism and nightmares and imagery seen nowhere save the subconscious of Goya or even Hawksmoor himself") and even an imagined cast list, Millar pulled the wool over everyone's eyes for a short time, before the whole thing was revealed as a trick. Welles himself would have loved it, and the story perfectly proves why people continue to believe hoaxes today: we'll happily go along with something if we want to believe that it's true.

"Perhaps it was a man dressed up in a monkey-skin; if so it was a brilliantly executed hoax and the perpetrator will take his place with the great hoaxers of the world."

Ironically enough, Roger Patterson – the man thought to have engendered the hoax – received a letter from Thailand shortly after he'd gone public with his "discovery", revealing that there was a real Sasquatch being holed-up in a Buddhist monastery. Patterson poured his savings into travelling to the country to discover the truth; only to find out that he had been tricked when he got there.

This is far from the only example of the filmed hoax. In 1995, Ray Santilli, a 38-year old music promoter and amateur filmmaker, revealed footage of an alien autopsy – apparently taken in New Mexico in 1947. The footage was shown internationally on television and, despite a recent admission from Santilli that parts of the film were "restored" after he got his hands on it, it also hasn't 100% been ruled a hoax. As Santilli said in an old interview, "It's now nearly three years since the film went public. If it's a hoax it would have been proven a long time ago."

Neither of these however, are as bizarre (or – if you believe them – as far-reaching) as the assertions of former BBC sports presenter David Icke. According to Icke, the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers were the handiwork of a ruling class of reptilian humanoids, called Annunaki. The conspiracy goes far deeper than that too: this same class of shape-shifting reptile was also behind the Holocaust and the Oklahoma City bombings, as well as being the founding figures in groups like the Freemasons and the Illuminati. Oh, and they class The Queen, George Bush, Bob Hope and the Clintons among their members. To date Icke has written several books, including *The David Icke Guide To The Global Conspiracy* and *Human Race Get Off Your Knees*. Whether you classify these as science fiction, science fact or – perhaps – Self Help, depends entirely on your disposition. As well as maybe whether or not you're secretly an Illumaniti reptile. For his part, Icke continues to insist that he's telling the truth.

I WANT TO BELIEVE

In a sense it is easy to see why hoaxes sit so well with science fiction. Sci-fi, at its root, is about questioning what is real and what is not. As long as conspiracy theories abound (and less scrupulous people are willing to use that to create elaborate hoaxes) Hollywood filmmakers and sci-fi writers are always going to have an endless supply of ready-formed, high concept ideas: all expressing the innermost doubts, fears and questions that people have about the world around them. In the sci-fi collection, *The Enemy Papers*, author Barry B Longyear (the first writer to win the Hugo, Nebula and John W Campbell Award for Best New Writer in the same year) sums up the closest that sci-fi has to an applicable mantra, "Believe this: question everything, accept the wholeness of no truth nor the absolute rightness of any path. Make this your creed... for in this creed stands your right to freedom."

And that includes the freedom to fake Martian landings and sell alien autopsy tapes. SFX

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POLTER

They're heeeeeeeere...! Calum Waddell makes sure the television is switched off, and keeps well away from any blue-eyed, blonde-haired children, for a look back at one of the finest fear films ever created...

It's one of those age-old celluloid conundrums that just never seems to disappear: who exactly *did* direct *Poltergeist*?

Those who insist that producer Steven Spielberg is the real talent behind 1982's horror hit probably refer curiosity-seekers to the ragged, by-the-teeth, budgetarily-challenged backwoods terror of Tobe Hooper's most famous feature *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974). Although a certified scare-classic, the poverty-stricken production values and unrelenting, ultra-vicious violence hardly seem comparable to the widescreen suburban beauty and visual razzle dazzle that highlights *Poltergeist*. Yet, such critics probably fail to consider that the same man who brought us Leatherface also graduated onto the technically adept, cinemascope shocks of the Universal-produced slasher *The Funhouse* (1981) and, post-Spielberg, helmed the mega-budgeted SF farce *Lifeforce* (1985).

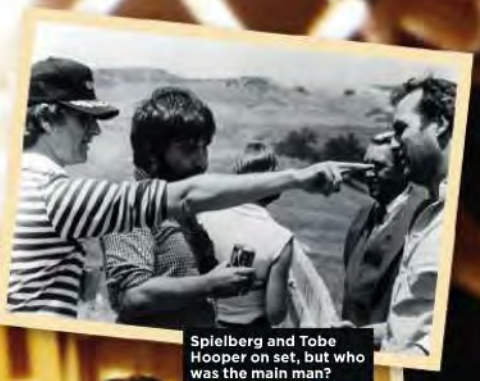
And when sandwiched between these two terror titles, *Poltergeist* suddenly does not seem *too* out of place in the Hooper oeuvre.

Yet, one thing is for sure – when it comes to this classic creeper, neither director nor producer like to speak up about it (both are missing from so-called "special edition" DVD releases). Thankfully, Craig Reardon – the man behind *Poltergeist*'s superb make-up effects work – is more forthcoming when he sits down with *SFX*.

"The last thing I expected was the way that film happened," begins the special effects wizard, whose blockbuster-sized work also includes *The Goonies*, *Dick Tracy* and *The X-Files*. "I came home and there was a message on the answer machine. Tobe Hooper, who I had previously worked with on *The Funhouse*, was telling me that he was at MGM and he was about to do a film with Steven Spielberg. Then he said that he wanted to talk to me about it. It was like a gift from the gods. I went over there and he told me a little about *Poltergeist* – it was a haunted house movie but, instead of being set on the top of a hill, it was based in the middle of suburbia. It sounded very different. But Tobe's biggest worry at that time was creating this entity which, in the script, is referred to as a 'horror head'. Ironically, that's the one thing that I built which never made it into the picture [laughs]. As far as working with Tobe though... it was a pleasure. I like him very much and the reason I got that show was down to him. Period."

FAMILY STRIFE

The story of the middle-class Freeling family who witness their daughter (the tragically short-lived Heather O'Rourke) being abducted by spirits, *Poltergeist* »



Spielberg and Tobe Hooper on set, but who was the main man?

The unfortunate Freeling family, headed by Craig T Nelson.

Images © MGM/Everett/Rex Features (1), Aquarius Collection (2)

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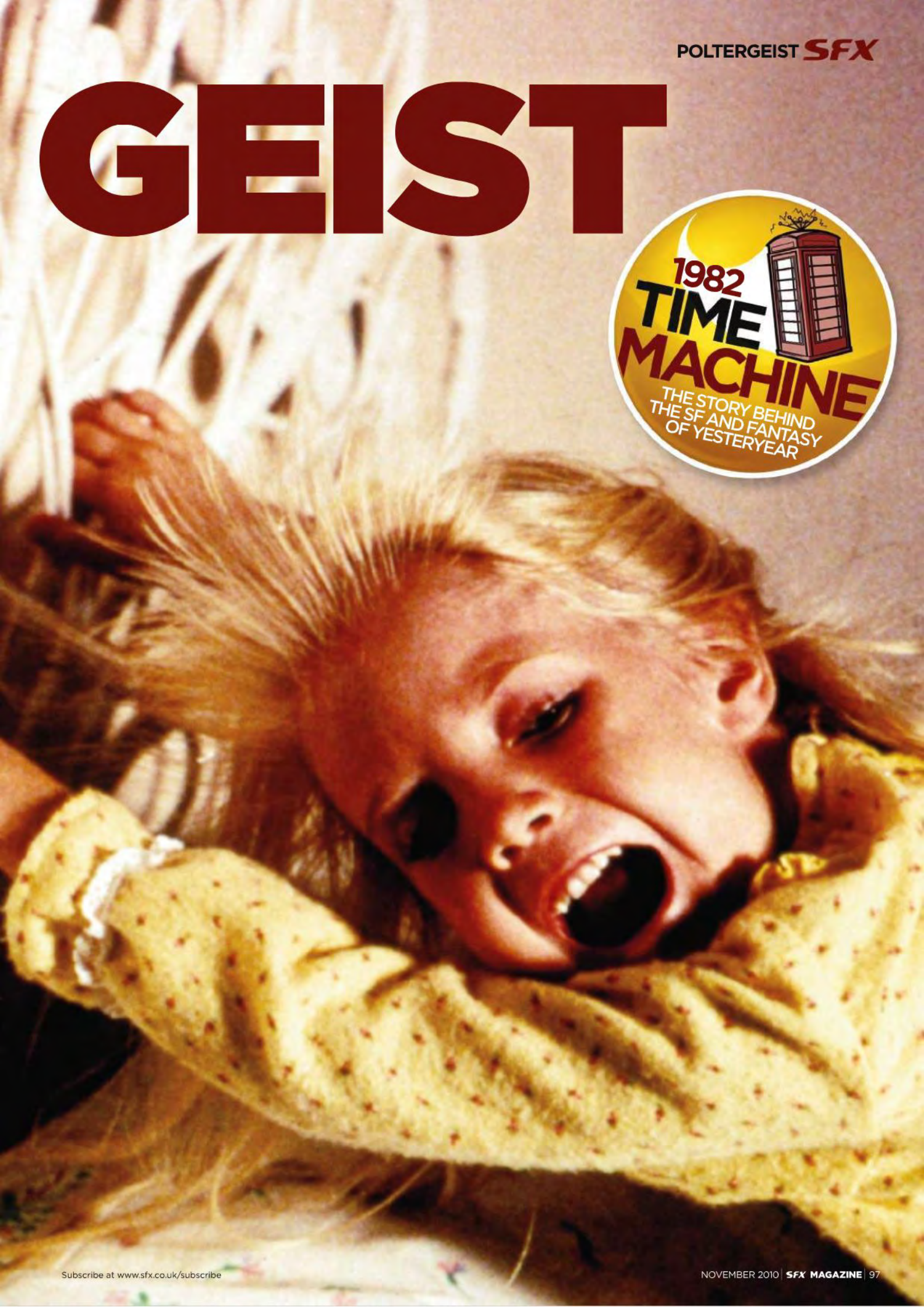
GEIST



1982 TIME MACHINE

THE STORY BEHIND THE SF AND FANTASY OF YESTERYEAR

Tree's company in one of the film's many unsettling sequences.

would become a cause celebre around Hollywood – with Spielberg even forced to take out advertisements in the trade papers in order to insist upon Hooper's authorship of the picture. However, whilst *Poltergeist* gave Spielberg the chance to employ a lot of his old friends (including Kathleen Kennedy and Frank Marshall on producing duties and *Close Encounters/1941* editor Michael Kahn), Reardon represents one of the holdovers from Hooper's work – alongside another make-up maverick in Dorothy Pearl (who had been on *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*). Nevertheless, as production intensified on the feature, Hooper's biggest budgeted work to date, Reardon did notice a considerable influence of the hands of Spielberg.

"The nature of my job had me in a workshop for a lot of the shoot," he admits. "But whenever I was on the set Spielberg was there. Later I was able to talk my way into the recording of Jerry Goldsmith's score and Steven was there too – making home movies."

So was this presence ever a burden on Hooper?

"I would say that Steven is an enthusiast," states Reardon. "He is not an old time movie mogul who sits in his office and I don't think Tobe was ever in a position to say 'get that guy off my set' in a typical, ballsy, Hollywood tough guy manner. Besides which, that's a good way to politic yourself out of the business [laughs]. Tobe was always very deferential to Steven and it is true that I did see things being set up by Spielberg and he was also involved with talking to the actors. I never saw him say action or cut – Tobe did that. But in some instances you were left with the impression that is all he was *permitted* to do."

The reason for this, however, may have as much to do with Tobe's manners than anything else – as Reardon maintains.

"Tobe always had a lot of good ideas," continues Reardon. "Now, I've worked with directors where you would be hard pressed to get one good idea from them. But Tobe is a gentle soul who, I think, functions best in an atmosphere where he is given a courteous distance and has the chance to work through his film the way he wants. Sometimes, when working with actors, I saw him being a bit inhibited in dealing with them. He had the image that he wanted, and he knew what he wanted the actor to do, but he didn't always have the words. There are different kinds of directors, though – William Wyler, one of the old Hollywood greats, is famous for having almost nothing to say to actors except, 'Do it again'. And those brave enough to say, 'Am I doing it right?' would only hear 'I'll let you know.'"

As such, Reardon speculates that perhaps the shoot of *Poltergeist* was not moving along at the sort of speed that Spielberg was hoping for.

Iconic images include the girl and the TV set and the face collapsing in the mirror.

"If there was a sense that Spielberg was injecting himself more and more, it was less to do with Tobe as a director than it was he maybe wasn't moving along fast enough. Spielberg had had this winning streak for a long time – but *1941* didn't do so good and he had taken that to heart. So he had just done *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* for George Lucas and he had turned over a whole new leaf on making that. It was just about to be released – and we were all invited to see it before *Poltergeist* started, which really made everyone go into the shoot with the best of expectations. Spielberg was particularly energised because, unlike *1941* which got dogged down with production difficulties, he went through *Raiders* like a pile driver. Well, doesn't this suggest that when he went onto *Poltergeist* he wanted to keep that pace up? My feeling is that he might have been piling some expectations onto Tobe that perhaps he was not aware of or that Tobe could not fulfil."

UNHAPPY MEDIUM

Moreover, to make matters worse, the late Zelda Rubinstein – who played Tangina, the medium through which the spirits that inhabit the Freeling family home make contact – would insist until her dying day that Spielberg was the man calling the shots

THE REAL HORROR STORY

Becoming the subject of what would be known as "The *Poltergeist* Curse", child actress Heather O'Rourke shot to stardom, aged just seven years old, in the Spielberg production and returned to her best known role for 1986's financially successful, but critically lambasted sequel, *Poltergeist II: The Other Side*. Sadly, at just 12 years of age, during the making of 1988's shambolic *Poltergeist III*, O'Rourke would die from "cardiopulmonary arrest and intestinal stenosis". Her *Poltergeist* co-star, Dominique Dunne, would also meet an untimely death: murdered 19 days before her 23rd birthday by an ex-boyfriend.

Images © Everett Collection (1), Aquarius (1), Kobal Collection (3)

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The look of the floating corpses were inspired by EC Comics.

Never build a house on a cemetery...

"Spielberg had had a winning streak but *1941* didn't do so well and he had taken that to heart"

throughout the shoot.

"Well, she would know who she was directed by," admits Reardon. "But that is one person's opinion and when you work on movies you find that you get a lot of different feedback – 'I loved him', 'He's an asshole', you hear it all. I can tell you that I had many conversations with Tobe once I had the job on *Poltergeist*. I would prepare drawings and I would present my work to both Steven and Tobe. They were both selective."

That said, at least one gruesome moment in *Poltergeist*, commonly thought to be straight from the brain matter of Hooper, actually originated from the effects department...

"I made life harder on myself with my friend Mike MacKenzie, who was working with me," recalls Reardon. "He said, 'Wouldn't it be amazing if, in the scene where the parapsychologist looks in the mirror, his face fell apart?' Now, originally he was only supposed to see a corpse in the mirror but I thought, 'Wow, that is much better. That's a lot of work but it would be a real show stopper.' So I called up the production office, got Kathleen Kennedy and she laughed because she was enthused and she said, 'I'll talk to Steven and get back to you.' Within half an hour she called me back and said, 'Spielberg loves it but he wants it to look as good as *Alien*', which had made a big impression in the industry because of its gruesome, slimy, bloody practical effects. I said, 'Oh, it will be,' and that had nothing to do with Tobe. Yet that scene is often said to be his trademark moment in *Poltergeist*."

Other grisly special effects work faced Reardon during *Poltergeist*'s freaky finale – when the contents of an old Indian burial ground begins to spew out of the earth...

"The corpses that come out of the ground were particularly gruesome," laughs the artist. "I discussed the look of the corpses with Tobe and I brought him a book on the famous mummies of Guanajuato, Mexico. Over there, they have dead people on display, and they are appalling but oddly constipated and inert looking. They just don't look threatening enough and I knew the way the scenes were written that we had to think that they might be alive – you were not supposed to grasp what was going on in that scene. That was very important to Spielberg too. I said to Tobe, 'We can do it totally realistic or we can make it a bit more like an EC comic book,' and Tobe liked the latter idea. Which is great – that is exactly what you want from a director. You don't want a wishy-washy director who says, 'Oh, why don't you show me various versions? I'll choose one after seeing them all.' That's just masturbation and it wastes time."

Thankfully, despite any on-set problems, *Poltergeist* would quickly go down as one of the greatest screen ghost stories of all time: eventually spawning two (sub-par and Spielberg-less) sequels as well as a television franchise. Meanwhile, despite rumours of a fall out, Hooper and Spielberg actually would reunite in the future (albeit on a smaller scale) with *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* maestro taking the helm of the pilot instalment of *Taken* and also directing an episode of *Amazing Stories*. Yet, with Spielberg's moving on to Oscar wins and blockbuster after blockbuster and Hooper navigating a path that concludes with, well, *Crocodile* and a remake of *The Toolbox Murders*, the chances of a future reunion seem somewhat far-fetched...

"I would work with Tobe again in a moment," concludes Reardon. "Tobe was great on *The Funhouse* and, I think, if he could have done it at his own pace he would have been fine on *Poltergeist* too." SFX

TOBE'S CAREER IN FEAR

Tobe Hooper may be lionised for creating *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* but his post-power tool CV is decidedly uneven. He would quit his 1977 sophomore effort *Eaten Alive* – and was fired from *The Dark* (finally made in 1979) and the killer snake shocker *Venom* (completed in 1981). The made-for-television vampire creeper *Salem's Lot* (1979) represented his first post-*Chain Saw* classic and 1981's *The Funhouse* was a worthwhile effort – however, the big budgeted flops *Lifeforce* (1985) and *Invaders From Mars* (1986) equalled the sort of career suicide that even *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* (1986) could not resurrect. Equally disastrous were *Spontaneous Combustion* (1989), *Night Terrors* (1994) and *Mortuary* (2005) – although a return-to-form is threatened with his forthcoming Stephen King adaptation *From A Buick 8*.

Even the world's best estate agent might have his work cut out...

THE SFX

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Actress Michelle Forbes speaks on behalf of *True Blood* on stage.

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That time of year has rolled around again! Let's heave a box of Golden Rayguns out of the cupboard and place an order for several crates of dry sherry: preparations for our annual *SFX* awards have begun. It's your chance to shape the biggest night of the *SFX* Weekender...

SCI-FI'S BRIGHTEST AND BEST

This year the big gongs went to *Harry Potter And The Half Blood Prince* for Best Film and *Supernatural* for Best TV Show, with JJ Abrams sending us a video message in response to his win as Best Director, and a certain Mr Gerry Anderson trousering the Lifetime Achievement award. Best novel? Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*. Check out issue 193 for the full roll of honour.

NEWS FOR THE 2011 AWARDS

Of course, we're doing it all again this year! Novelist and raconteur Robert Rankin hosted magnificently in 2010 so we're honoured to announce that he'll be back, commanding the stage once again as we reveal the *SFX* readers' favourites!

VOTE AND WIN!

It's all about you: so zoom over to www.sfx.co.uk/awards2011 and vote in the 20 categories. The period of eligibility is 6 December 2009 to 14 December 2010, so you can cast a vote for anything that came out in that time. We've included a few handy suggestions on the site in case you can't quite remember. There are prizes (one chalet for four people for three nights and another 15 pairs of day passes for the Weekender, which will include entry to the Awards evening) so be sure to leave your details when you're done voting.

SFX SCI-FI AWARDS 2011

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AWARDS 2011

and win tickets to see the awards live!

Cast Your Vote

These are the categories which you can vote for. For reasons of time and space, only the first 10 awards will be dished out live on the night. All the results will be revealed in a big feature in issue 206 on sale in February 2011.

1 BEST FILM
2 BEST FILM DIRECTOR
3 BEST TV SHOW
4 BEST TV EPISODE
5 BEST ACTRESS
6 BEST ACTOR
7 BEST NOVEL
8 BEST COMIC OR GRAPHIC NOVEL
9 BEST VIDEOGAME
10 BEST COLLECTABLE, MODEL, TOY OR BOARDGAME
11 SEXIEST MALE
12 SEXIEST FEMALE
13 BEST SPECIAL EFFECT
14 BEST MONSTER OR VILLAIN
15 BEST DEATH SCENE
16 BEST PLOT TWIST
17 BEST FIGHT SCENE
18 BEST GADGET OR FUTURE TECHNOLOGY
19 BEST LINE
20 BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT OR MISSED OPPORTUNITY

Chosen By SFX

As before, there will be five special categories that are chosen by the *SFX* editorial team. These will also be awarded live on the night:

★ LIFETIME CONTRIBUTION
★ CULT HERO
★ SCI-FI PHENOMENON
★ BREAKOUT OF THE YEAR
★ HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

VOTE NOW!
Poll opens 22 Sept and closes 14 December 2010

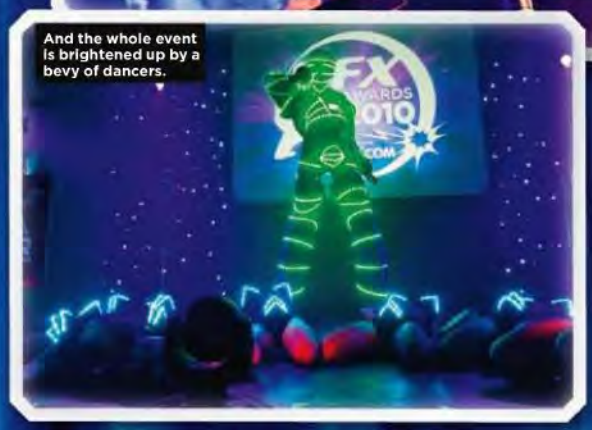
TERMS AND CONDITIONS

To enter the prize draw for tickets you must vote in the *SFX* Sci-Fi Awards at **www.sfx.co.uk/awards2011** between 22 Sept and 14 Dec 2010. This competition is only open to people aged 18 or over. The winner(s) will be selected at random from all the entries received between the relevant dates and will be notified within 28 days of the closing date. The winner of the main prize (a Gold Plus chalet for four people) will be required to give names and addresses for all four people attending the Weekender. The ticket includes day and evening access to the *SFX* Weekender at Pontin's Camber Sands (Sussex, UK) on 3, 4 and 5 February 2011 and does not include travel of any kind. Winners of the day weekend passes will also be required to give names and addresses of all parties attending. The ticket includes day access to the *SFX* Weekender at Pontin's Camber Sands (Sussex, UK) until 12pm on 4 and 5 February 2011 and does not include travel or accommodation of any kind. Physical tickets will not be issued, it is a paperless event. Full terms and conditions are available on the voting site. Unless otherwise stated, competitions are open to all UK residents of 18 years and over, except employees of: (a) the Company; (b) any third party appointed by the Company to organise and/or manage the Competition; and (c) the Competition sponsor(s). By entering this competition, you consent to us using your personal details to send you information about products and services of Future which may be of interest to you. If you do not want to receive this information, please (un)tick the appropriate boxes on the website.

Top model maker Bill Pearson presents Gerry Anderson with an award.

Glamorous stage assistant Lady Rankin presents another gong.

Writer Toby Whithouse humbly accepts a prize for *Being Human*.


And the whole event is brightened up by a bevy of dancers.

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THE BEST REVIEWS SECTION IN THE UNIVERSE!

SFX RATED

EDITED BY IAN BERRIMAN

This issue: 78 reviews!

RATINGS EXPLAINED

Every review is one individual's honest, personal opinion – cross our hearts and hope our thumbs drop off. This issue's movie-to-videogame based rating system:

- ★★★★★ Goldeneye 64
- ★★★★ Ghostbusters
- ★★★ Aliens Versus Predator
- ★★ Avatar
- ★ ET (landfill alert!)

PRINCE OF PERSIA

A videogame adap worth exploring?

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"Wish I'd joined CND."

DESPICABLE ME

Not despicable but not a triumph

U • 95 mins • 15 October

Distributor: **Universal Pictures International**

Directors: **Pierre Coffin, Chris Renaud**

Cast: **Steve Carell, Jason Segel, Russell Brand, Julie Andrews, Will Arnett, Kristen Wiig**

★★★½

Day in, day out superheroes fight for truth, justice and the safety of mankind without course for recompense or reward, but have you ever found yourself wishing the bad guy could just catch a break? Ever hoped that for once Spidey would get squished or the Joker would have the last laugh? Then you might like to spend some time in the world of *Despicable Me* because not only are supervillains at the top of the food chain, but superheroes don't even exist.

Identifying with the bad guy is an increasingly common theme in comic book worlds and one already thoroughly mined for a different demographic by Joss Whedon's rather brilliant *Dr Horrible* (not seen it? Get thee to the interwebs!). It's not surprising. A a complex villain is endlessly more intriguing than a clean-cut boy wonder and, morals be damned, *Despicable Me*'s chief nasty Gru – a man who will make a child a balloon animal before popping it inches away from their traumatised face – is just about the most subversive character in a children's animation since those from *The Magic Roundabout*.

With an accent somewhere between Khan and an Eastern European crime lord, Gru is the world's greatest supervillain. Scratch that, the world's second greatest supervillain. In order to reclaim his title from obnoxious young upstart Vector – the pristine white iPod to Gru's dirty, industrial Boom Box – Gru plans the greatest heist of all time. He's going to pluck the Moon out of the sky, but to complete the final stage of his scheme and infiltrate Vector's hi-tech lair (complete with sharks under the floor) Gru must use three orphaned girls – Margo, Edith and Agnes – taking them into his home. Before you can say "reformed criminal mastermind" they start to warm his cold, black heart.

Unfortunately for *Despicable Me*, any animated film released since the late '90s is inevitably going to be measured against Pixar's stellar output over the past decade and while it fares better than most, the film falls well short of the instant classic status so regularly bestowed on Pixar's audience pleasing, all-ages output. It manages to pull off the peculiar feat of feeling fresh and woesomely predictable at the same time – pulling on the heartstrings when you're crying for it to sustain the cheeky rebellious streak of the

DNA SCAN

- Despicable deeds – 30%
- Schmaltz – 30%
- Minions – 19%
- Gadgets – 14%
- Jokes for adults – 7%

Vector and his terrifying Jigsaw of Evil.

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SEND IN THE CLONES

Three more cut-and-paste races

SONTARANS

DOCTOR WHO (1973-present)

First appearing in 1973's "The Time Warrior", these talking baked potatoes are a race of militaristic cloned humanoids with one weak spot – a probic vent on the back of their necks which they use to recharge themselves, and which encourages them never to retreat in the face of battle. With a face like that no wonder the only option they have when it comes to reproduction is asexual.

CLONE TROOPERS

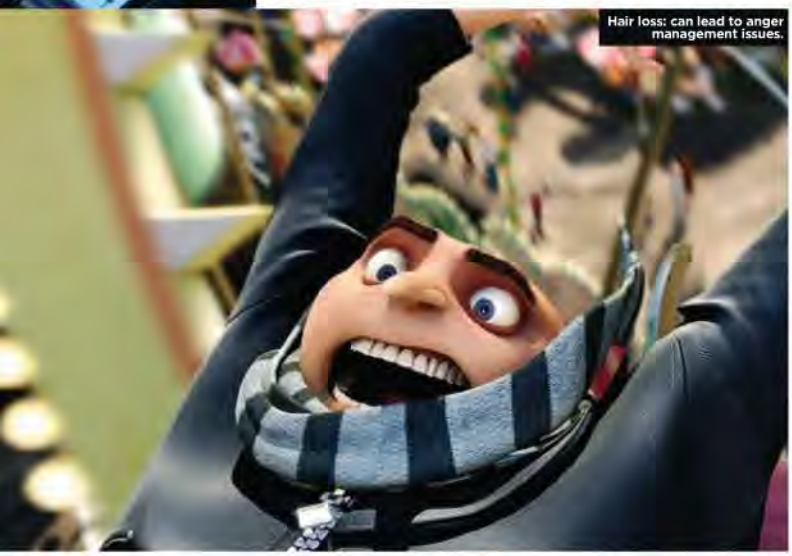
STAR WARS (1979-present)

Supposedly created to fight for the Republic during the Clone Wars before Order 66 saw them turn to the Dark Side, the surviving progeny of Jango Fett eventually went on to fill the ranks of Imperial Stormtroopers in the Galactic Empire. With special skills including banging their heads on the top of port holes and a knack for missing their target it's possible inbreeding was a problem.

IDIOT HENCHMEN

THE SPIRIT (2008)

With names like Phobos, Logos, Pathos, Rancheros, Amigos and Ethos you might expect the Octopus's cloned heavies to be more cultured than the average henchman. No such luck. Turns out the gimmick is just another in a long line of duff jokes in this 2008 Frank Miller misfire. With their sub-zero intellect we're starting to spot a trend – are all clones numpties?



Hair loss: can lead to anger management issues.

The world's smallest snooker cue was basically useless.

opening half hour. This incongruous mix is reflected in the score, which lumps traditional soaring orchestral tracks with the hip-hop beats of Pharrell Williams (he of The Neptunes and NERD) to no great effect – you wish they'd stick with one or the other.

Too often the humour falls into the pop culture trap popularised by Dreamworks, with nonsensical references to the likes of *Taxi Driver* or *The Godfather* which achieve little more than excluding the audience the film is aimed at. In one example, a sign above a Bank Of Evil reads "Formerly The Lehman Brothers", but maybe we're underestimating the number of ten-year-old readers of the *Financial Times*.

Though not critical, these shortcomings are all the more disappointing given that the film's anarchic spirit can be a whole mess of fun. The voice acting, from Carell, to Jason Segel's nerdy Vector to Russell Brand's decrepit Dr Nefario is superb, but the stars of the show are Gru's Minions – an

Wasn't that plant in *Dr Terror's House Of Horrors*?

army of canary yellow clones, decked in dungarees, chattering away and created seemingly to give Gru's gargantuan ego an audience. They might easily be

Too often the humour falls into a pop culture trap

mistaken for oversized suppositories – in both appearance and intellect. Existing in a world with a Tex Avery Warner Bros logic, they are a reliable source of slapstick sight gags and provide the film's biggest laughs. No surprise then, that in a similar vein to *Madagascar*'s penguins, Illumination are already working on short films featuring the Minions to run before future features.

Presented in, ahem, "eye-popping 3D", the world has a unique flavour for an American feature, having been largely animated by a French effects house. It works incredibly well – the directors' European influences infusing movement and design with a feel closer to Sylvain Chomet's *Belleville Rendez-Vous* than the chunky Playmobil look of American efforts. Despite best intentions (and a rather nifty aerial dogfight), however, the 3D adds little – do yourself a favour and see it in 2D to appreciate the vibrant colours as they're meant to be.

Though it never quite lives up to the edgy, irreverent premise, *Despicable Me* is one of the better CG animations not to emerge from Pixar's hallowed halls in recent years, with characters more than deserving of the franchise treatment. Superheroes – who needs 'em?

Jordan Farley

Far from spouting gibberish the Minions speak *minion-eise* – a language devised by the directors that can be translated back to English.

MIND PROBE

JANET HEALY

Producer of Despicable Me

Were superheroes ever part of the world of *Despicable Me*?

» No, I don't think so. There were never any Marvel Comics kind of guys or anything like that but there are people that have very cartoony weaponry, like where did the squid launcher come from? It was a question we did ask ourselves but we decided from the beginning to have a different challenge for Gru than the usual hero vs villain, or in this case villain vs hero. The challenge here is: is he past his prime?

Why did you choose to make the film in 3D?

» I love the look of computer graphics and I love the dimension that computer graphics bring when you do a stereoscopic render – I think it makes for beautiful images. We have things coming out at the audience like you'd expect but it's done in a really smart way so it doesn't feel like a gimmick. You appreciate and enjoy all the shapes and the colours and the depth so much more but you have to think about the cutting, the pacing and the composition differently.

How difficult was it to find the voice for Gru?

» We went through so many different character designs that his look changed a lot over the course of the film. He was the last character that we really landed but we had none of those troubles with Steve Carell. As soon as we heard what he was doing with the role we knew he was perfect. We needed range and something very distinctive so it stands out when you hear it, it sounds unusual, and I like comics in animation who bring a naturalness to their reading where they can take a line and twist it into something unexpected.

Do you have a favourite character?

» It's been really fun to watch the girls' characters emerge over time and have them each be distinctive. Vector I like because he's like any teenager, but a supervillain: he plays videogames, he's got all the cool stuff and he likes fish a lot – not to eat, he keeps them and has fish weapons, I'm not sure why! But Steve's performance gave us so much to animate to, he's so talented. He'd get straight into character and come up with the most hilarious stuff, so it's got to be Gru. Jordan Farley

Only a bullet would stop Anderson making more *Resident Evils*.

RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE

Alice In Zombieland – again

15 • 96 mins • OUT NOW!
Distributor: **Sony Pictures**
Director: **Paul WS Anderson**
Cast: **Milla Jovovich, Ali Larter, Kim Coates**
★★

Milla Jovovich. Leaping, running or just standing. Firing two guns in slow motion. That's essentially the only appeal that *Resident Evil: Afterlife*, the latest outing in the mysteriously popular game-based film franchise, has to offer.

To give him credit, on his return to the series he launched back in 2002, Paul WS Anderson indulges in plenty of fan-pleasing touches, adding Wentworth Miller as Chris Redfield and bringing in both the Axeman and Albert Wesker from the console titles. Trouble is, making sure those who love the game get to play Spot The Shout-Out doesn't actually make for a satisfying cinematic experience.

We're back with Alice and her dual mission: to both track down survivors of the undead apocalypse begun by the Umbrella corporation; and to lay the smack down on the evil types who run it. Reunited with Claire Redfield (Ali Larter), she picks up a random group of stragglers at a zombie-besieged prison near a ravaged Los Angeles. Which is where we meet moody ex-soldier Chris. Beyond Jovovich, Miller and Larter, the cast is mostly there to get picked off by an increasingly pointless series of villains. The hulking Axeman, for example, appears out of nowhere for no good reason and threatens our heroes for about ten minutes. Wesker (Shawn Roberts) is a more palpable threat, but he's stymied by hewing so close to the game's character that he comes off as a stilted take on Hugo Weaving's Agent Smith.

Borrows from *The Matrix* far too much

The Matrix has been a touchstone for Anderson and the series for years, but *Afterlife* borrows from it far too much, while slicing out all but the most cursory characterisation and story. Okay, so you don't watch these movies for subtle nuance, but even the setpieces start to seem stale. And that's before the director lets his inner 11-year-old out and flings everything from bullets to sunglasses at the audience now that he has 3D. Brash and bombastic this new entry might be, but it's also criminally boring. **James White**

Thick Bob never could find his eyes very well.

Anderson was the first to use the Phantom Camera for 3D, a gadget usually found taking slow-mo footage of NASA spacecraft.

SFX's issue 200 party didn't end well.

ENTER THE VOID

Death feels like forever

18 • 135 mins • 24 September
Distributor: **Trinity**
Director: **Gaspar Noé**
Cast: **Nathaniel Brown, Paz de la Huerta, Cyril Roy**
★★★★½

Enter The Void is two and a quarter hours long. Hang on to that fact-ette, as this afterlife trip by the director of *Irreversible* plays merry hell with your sense of time. After you've watched abstract animations à la *2001*'s star gate, pinged back and forth through the deceased hero's memories, and circled Tokyo until even the strip clubs are monotonous, you may feel you've been watching it for six hours.

In this arthouse *Lovely Bones*, there are no beatific CGI visions, no cute angel spirit guides, but lots of jump-cut repetitions, punch-in-face shocks and hardcore rumpy-pumpy. It's all presented from the protagonist's point of view, though this effect (thrilling and giddying early on) becomes less overt when we go out-of-body. The eyes we see through belong to Oscar (Nathaniel Brown), a youthful Western ex-pat living with his sister in the mad neon playground of Tokyo. Orphaned as kids, the siblings have left innocence far behind. Oscar is a drug dealer, while Linda (Paz de la Huerta) supports herself by poledancing.

Then Oscar is shot dead in a toilet cubicle. From here, we follow his wandering POV as he flies over the rooftops, reliving his childhood and its brutal end, and witnessing the fall-out from his demise. Tokyo is the perfect setting, an infinite psychedelic pinball machine. There's no murderer to catch, no big plot reveal, no flowery voice-overs as Noé forces us into the position of a lost ghost.

Noé wants us to *feel* this odyssey. Initial wonderment gives way to feelings of frustration, tedium and then appreciation of the astral to-ings and fro-ings, the rhythms of despair and consolation. You could walk out satisfied after 90 minutes, then come back for the XXX-rated finale – although be warned, it includes some *intimate* POV shots that you'll be cleaning from your head for days. **Andrew Osmond**

Gaspar Noé shot a sexually explicit promo for Placebo's "Protège-Moi" (a single only released in France). Google now, filth-hounds.

"That's where Bruno Brookes has been hiding!"

THE HOLE

Dante's Inferno

12A • 92 mins • 24 September
Distributor: **E1 Entertainment**
Director: **Joe Dante**
Cast: **Chris Massoglia, Haley Bennett, Teri Polo**
★★★

Family-friendly frights are a tricky thing to pull off. Push too hard and you risk traumatising pre-teens in the audience, too little and no-one is left clinging to the arm rests. Fortunately Joe Dante has form, having directed bona fide kid-horror classic *Gremlins* and adults-only fare such as *Piranha* and *The Howling*. But after two decades away from big-screen scares it seems the man who goaded the censors by microwaving a puppet may have gone soft, because his latest is about as bloodcurdling as the prospect of driving over a pothole.

Gimmick-du-jour 3D is the big selling point here – and what better showcase for its blurry, muted-coloured wonders than a never-ending pit located in the basement of Dane and Lucas Thompson's new suburban home? As they and jailbait neighbour Haley stare into it, it causes the trio's deepest darkest terrors to become reality; the only way to stop the nightmare is to face their fears head on. New gimmick, same old clichés, then.

An '80s throwback given a 21st century sheen, *The Hole* feels hopelessly dated from its opening frames, with every domestic horror trope – from the single mother family to dolls springing to life – rolled out for a new generation. The kids populate a world where adults exist only on the fringes and to serve the story, while the dialogue is ripe, the performances stilted and frequently awkward, the story conventional and safe.

Yet, in spite of all this, *The Hole* hits all the right notes for its target demographic – the younger end of the scale, at least – and Dante still has the chops to make it visually compelling for the rest. One room-of-lights sequence is particularly ace, while a madcap puppet attack is worth the entrance price alone – it's probably the closest we'll ever get to a Dante-directed *Gremlins* sequel. **Jordan Farley**

Dick Miller has a cameo in the film, as a pizza delivery guy. We make that the eighteenth Joe Dante-directed feature he's been in.

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Well, if they would go swimming after lunch...

PIRANHA 3D
Water palava

18 • 88 mins • OUT NOW!
Distributor: **Entertainment**
Director: **Alexandre Aja**
Cast: **Elisabeth Shue, Steven R McQueen, Kelly Brook, Jerry O'Connell**

A loose remake of Joe Dante's 1978 *Jaws*-chaser, weaponised for modern cinema with low wit and excess boobage, *Piranha 3D* plays like an all-too-calculated guilty pleasure.

Spring Break has arrived in Lake Victoria, summoning 10,000 horny teenagers. It's like the last days of the Roman empire. With, like, beerz 'n' shit. Wet t-shirts glisten, babes bounce on trampolines and the 3D camera prowls like a clammy perv. Meanwhile, deep below the surface, a seismic shudder unleashes a deadly shoal of prehistoric fish, as hungry for flesh as the cameraman.

There's a winking, knowingly hoary quality to the screenplay, not sharp enough for satire and too cynical to work as a homage. Richard Dreyfuss makes a shameful cash-grab cameo as what's clearly intended to be his turn from *Jaws*, while Ving Rhames informs us "I'm getting too old for this", a line too fossilised to even work as a cinematic in-joke.

Bloody feeding frenzies punctuate endless bouts of faux-porn. Kelly Brook performs an aquatic girl-on-girl ballet, naked but for blue flippers, like something out of a '50s Nudie Cuties flick. When the final reel rampage occurs, it's effectively staged – the razor-gnashered nasties go wild in the jock gene pool and there's impressive, if gut-churning prosthetic work in the massacre's aftermath – but there's a hint of something meaner, more troubling, in the sight of a topless woman being sliced in two by a length of rigging.

Relying on gross-out and shock in place of smarts or suspense, it's a film that reeks of talented people deliberately miring themselves in low-rent schlock. The lasting image is of a severed, half-digested todger, bobbing in the 3D murk – a fitting epitaph for this dreadful load of old cock. **Nick Setchfield**

This is the second remake of *Piranha*. The 1995 version was produced by Roger Corman and recycled footage from Joe Dante's original.

A TOWN CALLED PANIC
Truly fantastic in plastic

PG • 78 mins • 8 October
Distributor: **Optimum Releasing**
Directors: **Stéphane Aubier, Vincent Patar**
Cast: **Stéphane Aubier, Bruce Ellison, Vincent Patar**

A Town Called Panic has "cult" written all over it in Day-Glo yellow crayon. A fast and furious mix of *The Mighty Boosh* and *Toy Story* (with, bizarrely, a hint of *Eurotrash* thrown in, only in a kiddie way), the film made the Official Selection list at Cannes in 2009 – the first stop-motion animated feature ever to do so. And it thoroughly deserved to, being like nothing you've ever seen before.

It's a self-assured and utterly original love affair to the ridiculous, based on a Belgian TV series and given a feature-length spin that should win it legions of young fans. Hopefully they won't be put off by the French soundtrack and the accompanying subtitles, as redubbing it into English would be a heinous crime – the frenzied voice actors (who include the writer/directors), are hilariously perfect for their roles.

The cast of characters are led by the grumpy, gravelly-voiced Horse and his squeaky, squabbling pals,

But the next town was just mildly perturbed.

Cowboy and Indian, who find themselves launched into a series of adventures after an innocent gift of a barbecue for Horse's birthday draws the attention of a race of greedy underwater creatures. Insanity ensues. Houses are picked up and dragged away by thieves; our heroes fall through the insides of the Earth; they get captured and held prisoner on board a giant snowball machine wandering a frozen wasteland... If Wallace and Gromit took some peyote and appeared on *The Clangers*, this is the kind of surreal yet intoxicating nonsense that would result.

Films as unusual as this don't come along very often, and films this bizarre that are aimed at kids are even rarer. *A Town Called Panic* is chaotic, warped and impervious to logic – a total treasure just waiting to be discovered. **Jayne Nelson**

It took 260 days to shoot the movie's stop-motion animation, using 1,500 plastic figures with as many as 200 versions of each character.

JACKBOOTS ON WHITEHALL
Team America vs Dad's Army

15 • 93 mins • 8 October
Distributor: **Vertigo Films**
Directors: **Ed and Rory McHenry**
Cast: **Ewan McGregor, Rosamund Pike**

Like *Team America: World Police*, *Jackboots On Whitehall* tips its hat to Gerry Anderson's Supermarionation, also employing *Thunderbirds*-style puppets. However, it boasts none of the savage wit of Trey Parker's Iraq War satire – or indeed the charm of Nick Park's endearing claymations.

Set in an alternate timeline where the German army invades Britain in 1940, it was originally conceived as a *Born On The Fourth Of July*-inspired Vietnam War spoof. But after deciding to parody something closer to home, the brothers turned their attention to World War Two.

At the heart of the story is Chris (Ewan McGregor), an adopted farm worker who is inexplicably not allowed to join the army because his hands are too big. Along with the likes of sweetheart Daisy (Rosamund Pike), he journeys to London, where he saves Winston Churchill (Timothy Spall) from the advancing Germans. Everyone then retreats to Hadrian's Wall, where Chris enlists the help of

Traction engines: much-missed.

the fearsome blue-painted Scots after discovering that he actually hails from north of the border himself. Some good *Braveheart*-influenced laughs are raised over how the tartan hordes appear to be led by an Aussie, and the film would have been much sharper with more of this postmodern humour.

Ranging from the Dover coast to Trafalgar Square, the numerous animated backgrounds are impressive but the puppets' voices often seem out of synch, despite CGI being used to tighten up the facial expressions.

But the film's real undoing is the weak script. Dominated by tired racial stereotypes, ranging from Sanjeev Bhaskar's Punjabi guard Rupee to various OTT Nazis, it's as if the McHenry brothers have watched too many old episodes of *'Allo 'Allo*. A valiant effort, then, that sadly falls flat. **Stephen Jewell**

The impressive voice cast also features two co-stars from *Withnail And I* – Richard E Grant and Richard Griffiths.

COMING SOON
RELEASE DATES MAY CHANGE

1 OCTOBER
BACK TO THE FUTURE A reissue of the '80s classic – yeah, you've got it on DVD, but have you ever seen it on the big screen?

8 OCTOBER
THE LIFE AND DEATH OF CHARLIE ST CLOUD Fantasy romance starring Zac Efron as a guy torn between a new love affair and keeping a promise to the ghost of his brother.

15 OCTOBER
VAMPIRES SUCK The *Scary Movie* people are back (oh, rejoice...), this time turning their sights on the *Twilight* phenomena.

22 OCTOBER
LEGEND OF THE GUARDIANS: THE OWLS OF GA'HOOLE Zach Snyder directs this animated fantasy based on a series of children's books.
PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 2 This sequel to Oren Peli's no-budget horror phenomenon promises to be "true to the heart of" the original.

Let Me In arrives on Guy Fawkes Night. Scary!

5 NOVEMBER
LET ME IN *Cloverfield*'s Matt Reeves directs this American remake of sublime Swedish vampire film *Let The Right One In*.

12 NOVEMBER
SKYLINE Colin and Greg Strause (*Alien Vs Predator: Requiem*) bring us this LA-set SF thriller, in which people are hoovered up by alien ships...

19 NOVEMBER
HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS, PART ONE Harry sets out to destroy Voldemort's Horcruxes in the first half of the final Potter adaptation; part two is set to follow in July 2011.

26 NOVEMBER
MONSTERS Six years after a NASA probe crashed in Mexico, infecting the area with alien life-forms, a journalist escorts a tourist to the US border.

REVIEWED ONLINE

DEVIL
People stuck in a lift discover the Devil is amongst them in this horror based on an M Night Shyamalan story.

"Okay. Who did it...?"

Sadly, press screenings for this film took place after our deadline. Curses! We'll put our review up at www.sfx.co.uk as soon as we belly well can.

The googly-eye competition reaches its thrilling climax.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

Disney looks Farsi and wide for a *Pirates* replacement

2010 • 12 • 116 mins • £17.99 • OUT NOW!

Also available as DVD/Blu-ray (£23.99) and DVD/Blu-ray/digital copy (£25.99) packs

Distributor: **Walt Disney Home Entertainment**

Director: **Mike Newell**

Cast: **Jake Gyllenhaal, Gemma Arterton, Ben Kingsley, Alfred Molina, Richard Coyle**

★★☆☆☆ Extras: ★★★☆☆

What would happen if you took Johnny Depp's character out of *Pirates Of The Caribbean*? It'd be a tedious exercise in watching Orlando Bloom and Keira Knightley's characters trade stilted dialogue for hours. It's quirky Captain Jack who raises those Jerry Bruckheimer action films above rival by-the-numbers summer blockbusters; even the bloated sequels are lifted by his exuberance.

DNA SCAN

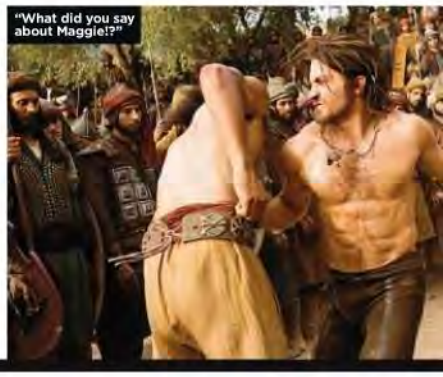
- Sun and sand – 31%
- *Pirates Of The Caribbean* – 22%
- Videogame logic – 21%
- Disney's *Aladdin* – 17%
- Ostrich racing – 9%

Well, now you don't have to imagine too hard; Bruckheimer's latest lavish epic reveals what it would be like if they'd forgotten to put Jack in. Great production values and bold *Arabian Nights* -style vistas are wasted on dull people dumping exposition from the back of a mule. Not until Alfred Molina rocks up, waggling his pantomime sheik eyebrows, do you get your first sense of anybody having fun in *Prince Of Persia*.

Jake Gyllenhaal plays the British-accented Dastan, an orphan from the slums adopted by King Sharaman. He's raised alongside Sharaman's two sons and they, improbably, get along like a yurt on fire until the king's ambitious brother Nizam (Ben Kingsley) encourages them to raid the city of Alamut. In the victory celebrations, Sharaman is poisoned and Dastan is accused of the murder. Alamut's Princess Tamina (Gemma Arterton) helps him escape. She's sworn to protect the city's magical dagger – an artefact that controls the Sands of Time – and securing it was Nizam's plan all along. By turns hindered and helped by "dishonourable entrepreneur" Amar (Molina), they try to clear Dastan's name while keeping the dagger safe.

The film is based on Jordan Mechner's long-running videogame franchise. Although there was a 2003 instalment with this exact title, the two plots are only loosely connected – the game's Maharajah and his daughter Farah don't appear at all, and the adopted urchin storyline is new. The magical dagger and sand that can rewind time are common to both, and the film's Xbox origins are apparent in a number of parkour-style action sequences – but they lack the energetic fun of an *Indiana Jones* flick or *Casino Royale*'s opening chase. Dastan's backstreet background gives him mastery of the rooftops, but his acrobatics are lifeless. Perhaps it's the fantastical surroundings, or the sudden moments of cheesy slow-mo; perhaps there are just too many odd dramatic choices in the script – Dastan is entirely absent from a climactic tower-top confrontation with Nizam's assassin, a scene in which Amar's sidekick Seso (a character we're barely

The costumes look great – even the horse can accessorise.



"What did you say about Maggie!?"

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THE MOVIE GAME

Three more gaming franchises that should be films

DRAGON AGE

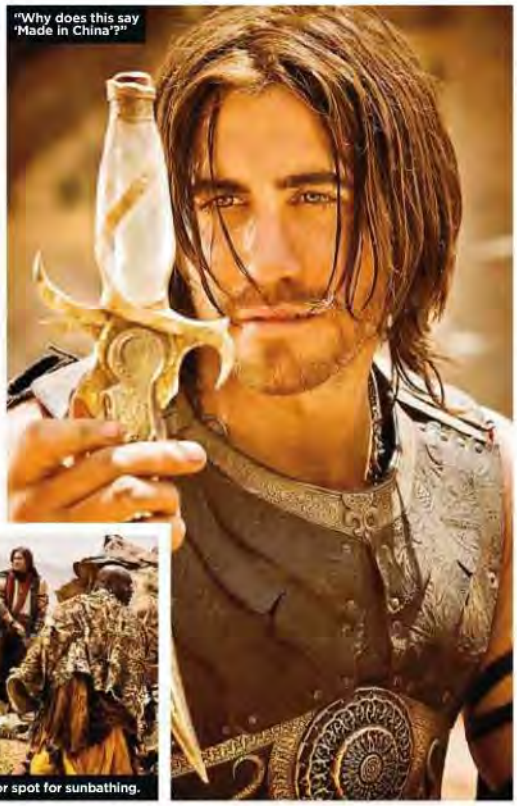
BioWare has a reputation for crafting some of the finest story-driven RPGs of the past 15 years, from the *Baldur's Gate* series to *Mass Effect 2*. But with epic fantasy taking a nosedive ever since the king returned in *The Lord Of The Rings*, we'd love nothing more than to see our level-20 Blood Mage battling big-screen Darkspawn in the land of Ferelden.

METAL GEAR SOLID

Play through any of the first four titles in Hideo Kojima's barmy series and you'd be forgiven for thinking they *were* movies, given the amount of time you spend watching cinematics. With an iconic hero, breathtaking setpieces and an impossibly intricate hard-SF plot that would send most heads spinning, the work's already half done.

MONKEY ISLAND

Videogames aren't just about action. Funnier than a three-headed monkey, five minutes with Ron Gilbert, Tim Schafer and David Grossman's snappy script should be enough to convince any studio to consign next-summer's high-concept romcom dreck to Davy Jones's locker. It would leave the competition devastated, mutilated and perforated!



"Why does this say 'Made in China'?"

In retrospect, it was a poor spot for sunbathing.

acquainted with) takes the role of champion.

In this attractive but bland muddle, it's the character of Tamina who suffers most. Gemma Arterton is lumbered with an old-fashioned belle-with-a-feisty-side role – the kind that inspires patronising observations like, "She's a lively one, where d'you find her?" As a girl who bargains with the gods to save the world, she should be significant, but Tamina is a plot point rather than a character. Any acts of bravery she does perform in the story – including her final sacrifice – are undone by the dagger's time-travelling powers. Certain plot elements in the concluding act deny Tamina her heroism; she's ultimately reduced to being a prize, her hand offered in marriage to cement a military alliance.

Prince Of Persia doesn't know what it's trying to say. Subtexts are introduced and then skimmed over as though any idea shouted out in the Disney café made it into the script. Picture the scene: "Hey, it's set in the Middle East – this film could be a metaphor for WMDs!" says one well-meaning liberal, clumsily jotting an idea about rumoured weapon forges on a napkin before being distracted by a coffee refill. Somebody picks up the conversation: "No, it has three princes in it – this film should be about the nobility of brotherhood!" He gets no further than scribbling it smugly in his Moleskine before the sarcastic barista interjects: "It's all fairly unlikely – maybe you can just say it's about *destiny*," a word that gets incorporated, pointlessly, into both the opening and closing narrations. Alas, with few remarkable characters or convincing setpieces, *Prince Of Persia*'s likely destiny is to be enjoyed most by Disney completists and retro gaming die-hards.

Certain plot elements deny Tamina her heroism

Extras: The DVD has just a single Making Of, but the Blu-ray boasts "CineExplore" interactive features that enable you to unlock behind-the-scenes secrets – 40 mini-featurettes, in other words. There's also a deleted banqueting scene. **Dave Bradley**

Jordan Mechner's first *Persia* game was inspired by the opening of *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*. Read more at tinyurl.com/SFXjmechner.

MIND PROBE

MIKE NEWELL

Director of *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time*

After directing the fourth *Harry Potter* film, were you intending to take on a film of this size as your next move?

>> No, I wasn't. I did do another movie – an adaptation of a South American novel called *Love In The Time Of Cholera* – which was roundly slaughtered in the press, although it's a great favourite of mine and I'm very glad to have made it. It was a colossal flop. The magic of flops is that no-one's ever heard of them! So I went off and I did something else, to kind of get my head clear. But then this thing just came up, and I loved the story.

What elements informed the visual style of the film, besides the videogame series on which it's based?

>> When he sent me this script, Jerry Bruckheimer also sent me this book of mostly French painters from the 19th century, who had gone off to Arabia and had painted the extraordinary romantic and exotic sights that they saw there. That book became hugely influential between me and the designer, and me and the cameraman, because as soon as we got to Morocco, we saw that these painters had got the light right, and they had got the architecture right.

How did you find the right balance of having the characters in *Prince Of Persia* do things that are out of the ordinary, but still within the realms of possibility?

>> What I said to myself before I even went into rehearsal with the actors was that the characters in this movie must believe in what they are seeing. They must believe in the story that some extraordinary hidden city is out there. Is it a fable? Is it myth? Is it real? Is it unreal? They don't know. So when they discover it, they can at first dismiss its power and its influence, and then little by little they can discover that those powers are real.

I suppose the example for me was always, imagine if the knowledge that there's other life out there in the universe was to come crashing in on today's world, what an extraordinary effect that would have and how important it would be to imagine that. Not to just reject it and run in terror from it. That was very much like what was happening here. **Joseph McCabe**

Walter hadn't quite mastered the torch thing.

FRINGE SEASON TWO

A cut above

2009-2010 • 15 • 968 mins • £49.99 • 27 September
Also available on Blu-ray (£59.99)
Distributor: Warner Home Video
Creators: JJ Abrams, Alex Kurtsman, Roberto Orci
Cast: Anna Torv, Joshua Jackson, Lance Reddick
★★★★½ Extras: ★★★★

While watching *Fringe*, your mind often turns to alternate universes – and not just because their existence is a major component of the arc story. When, say, a guy horrified by suddenly going postal doesn't think to mention that he's *had a microchip implanted in his brain*, you start to wonder if *Fringe* exists in a world that's not our own. You soon grow inured to such absurdities – spotting them becomes part of the fun.

In a parallel universe where *The X-Files* never existed, *Fringe* would surely be massive. As it is, it's simply a very good show. The premise – FBI team investigate strange phenomena – ensures the shadow of Mulder and Scully always hangs over it, but *Fringe* is more wilfully odd than its forerunner, never afraid to stretch incredulity in the search for moments of surrealistic weirdness. And while *The X-Files*'s arc plot sapped your will to live, *Fringe*'s ongoing story is truly gripping. When an episode like "Peter" comes along, heavy with fan-rewarding flashbacks to the '80s, it more than compensates for a handful of rote phenomena-of-the-week tales.

"Now, watch *The X-Files* and take notes."

Even at its weakest, *Fringe* is never boring. That's largely down to Walter Bishop, one of the best characters to emerge from SF TV in the last decade. This acid-fried boffin's past actions are contemptible, but the damaged present-day man is entirely loveable. Casually dissecting a corpse while discussing pancake recipes, conversationally uninhibited on matters toiletary or sexual, he's like a splice of Dr Frankenstein and Mo Mowlam. His endearing personality quirks bring humour to every episode, while his vulnerability and affection for his son add warmth and pathos.

The one fly in the ointment is how under-served Jasika Nicole is as junior agent Astrid. Come on JJ, find something for her to do, other than grocery shopping or passing Walter his bone saw! In one episode, pretty much all she does is *stir some custard*. Even a '60s *Doctor Who* companion would have bridled at that.

Extras: The major bonus is "Unearthed", an episode shot for season one but shelved, then dumped in the middle of season two's US broadcast. There are four commentaries, and they're good choices, including "Peter", "Brown Betty" and the final episode. "Beyond The Pattern" (25 mins) examines the show's increasingly dense mythology, while the props master talks through his work in "In The Lab" (six mins). You also get five behind-the-scenes featurettes on specific scenes, five deleted scenes, and two Easter eggs. **Ian Berriman**

Sebastian Roché's shapeshifter, Thomas Jerome Newton, shares his name with the titular character in *The Man Who Fell To Earth*.

Off-duty Superman: ever so clumsy.

FLASH FORWARD

Flushed downwards

2009-2010 • 15 • 924 mins • £35.99 • 27 September
Distributor: Walt Disney Home Entertainment
Creators: Brannon Braga, David S Goyer, Robert J Sawyer
Cast: Joseph Fiennes, John Cho
★★★ Extras: ★★★★

Welcome to the highest of high concepts, a shining diamond of a "what if?" that combines science fiction with philosophy. Based on the book by Robert J Sawyer, this 22-episode series sees every human on Earth blackout for 137 seconds. Chaos ensues as pilots and surgeons lose consciousness, but the bigger problem comes when everybody realises they've glimpsed six months into their own future.

The likely cause is an unorthodox particle accelerator experiment, but this was amplified and exploited by at least one shady group for their own ends – previous blackout experiments in Somalia point at some sort of plot. While an FBI task force investigates, the rest of humanity ponders the inevitability of their premonitions... especially those who saw nothing at all.

We're stuck with a cliffhanger

Despite a ritzy budget the show's downfall is its soap opera quality. Can two strangers from different continents find love? Will Olivia cheat on her husband? Will Mark start drinking again? Californians lumbering towards personal crisis is not the stuff of impressive sci-fi TV.

It's an uneven piece, and there are only two truly gripping characters – defiant veteran Aaron Stark (Brian F O'Byrne), who heads to Afghanistan to find his lost daughter, and arrogant scientist Simon Campos (Dominic Monaghan).

There are rumours a different network might fund another season, but until then we're stuck with a second, unresolved flashforward, a frustrating cliffhanger in the closing scenes. For now, *FlashForward* is lost in the middle of a permanent blackout.

Extras: Commentary on episodes 11 and 12, six featurettes, ten deleted scenes and a blooper reel. "*FlashForward* On Set" is a five-part look behind the scenes and there are nine little interviews with characters. **Dave Bradley**

The correct term for a flash forward in drama is "prolepsis", from the ancient Greek. The opposite is "analepsis" (narrative flashback).

The novelty knife rack always got a reaction.

INFERNO

A blaze of gory

1980 • 18 • 106 mins • £15.99 • OUT NOW!
Also available on Blu-ray (£22.99)
Distributor: Arrow Video
Director: Dario Argento
Cast: Irene Miracle, Leigh McCloskey
★★★★½ Extras: ★★★★

This isn't a great movie for cat lovers. In one scene, a woman's set upon by a pack of ferocious felines. As they fly through the air, it's impossible not to picture the stage-hands just off-screen, tossing them across the sound stage. We hope they got a few scratches...

It's the daftest moment in a film whose only logic is that of the nightmare, the director's aim to "evoke the bloody spirits of our collective conscience". This second in Dario Argento's "Three Mothers" series (following *Suspiria*) sees various characters investigating the second of these ageless witches: the Mother of Darkness, said to control New York. But this is just a peg on which to hang setpieces, including a magnificent sequence where heroine Rose (Irene Miracle) dives into a flooded ballroom, and a rat attack in Central Park.

Bearing all the hallmarks of Argento's finest work – lurid red and blue lighting, labyrinthine geography, oddball secondary characters – it's blessed with audacious intercutting (a gloved killer decapitating a string of paper dolls/a lizard gulping down a moth) and wonderful prowling tracking shots. Just don't expect it to make a lick of sense.

Extras: A well-presented package, including reversible sleeve, poster and booklet. Disc one features three new interviews. Argento (16 mins) doesn't engage that much, but his muse Daria Nicolodi (18 mins) is more forthcoming. A third quizzes director Luigi Cozzi on the tenuous Three Mothers connections of his 1989 film *The Black Cat*. Disc two features material from 2000. "Dario Argento: An Eye for Horror" (57 mins) is an excellent career overview with interviews with Argento and numerous collaborators. Nine minutes of *Inferno*-specific interview snippets with Argento and AD Lamberto Bava and 18 trailers complete the spread. **Ian Berriman**

Some of the film's big Chinese fighting rats escaped and interbred with those at Lazio's De Paolis studios. It took years to clear them out!

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Suicidal Sue was only a quarter suicidal.

LAST NIGHT
The final countdown

1998 • 15 • 92 mins • £15.99 • OUT NOW!

Distributor: **Park Circus**

Director: **Don McKellar**

Cast: **Don McKellar, Sandra Oh, Callum Keith Rennie, Sarah Pollet, David Cronenberg**

★★★★★ Extras: ★

SFX RECOMMENDS

How would you spend the last six hours before the end of the world, if you were certain even Bruce Willis couldn't save us? Start praying? Tell everybody what you *really* think of them? Take the phone off the hook and have a *Star Wars* marathon? That's the poser powering this low-budget Canadian indie by writer/director/star Don McKellar.

McKellar's character, Patrick, simply wants to be alone. His friend Craig (*Battlestar Galactica*'s Callum Keith Rennie) is busily ticking off a wish list of sexual experiences. Sandra (Sandra Oh) is struggling to make her way home to her husband, to carry out a suicide pact. What develops, as the lives of these and other characters intersect, is a beautifully understated tale which subtly draws humour from the bleakest of scenarios.

Quite why the world is ending is never spelled out. It's not important – this is the opposite of blockbuster disaster-porn. McKellar is interested in the people who exist off-screen in the likes of *Deep Impact*, not a special effects fireworks display. It's a movie full of desperately awkward social situations, presented in a way that always rings painfully true; from Patrick's final visit to his family, where they sit around pretending it's Christmas, to the scene when Craig asks if he'd mind helping him tick another box...

Its most startling accomplishment is to wring bittersweet romance from the apocalypse. The final moments, soundtracked by Cuban standard "Guantanamera", are almost unbearably poignant – you'll never think of it as just a soundtrack to football chants again. *Star Wars* marathon? Maybe. But be sure to schedule 90 minutes for this too.

Extras: Trailer and gallery.

Ian Berriman

McKellar also scripted the 2008 apocalyptic thriller *Blindness*. He first read the novel it's based on while in London promoting *Last Night*.

An hour later the flasher was finally arrested.

DOCTOR WHO: TIME AND THE RANI
A unique combination of utter bobbins

1987 • PG • 97 mins • £19.99 • OUT NOW!

Distributor: **2entertain**

Director: **Andrew Morgan**

Cast: **Sylvester McCoy, Bonnie Langford**

★ Extras: ★★★★

TOXIC WASTE

Colin Baker had a lucky escape. After he was sacked, producer John Nathan Turner hoped he'd return for one last regeneration story. This would have been it, which would have meant his era began and ended with the two biggest turkeys in classic *Who*'s 26-series run. Instead, Baker refused to return; perhaps it was a fit of (justifiable) pique, but maybe he just saw the script.

The episode was rewritten to introduce Sylvester McCoy, wearing a Harpo Marx wig in the opening moments, so he could roll over and regenerate before anyone noticed.

Now, if you cast someone like "children's entertainer" McCoy there are expectations you need to fight against. Instead, this story embraces every expectation and amplifies it. McCoy's Doctor is a pratfalling, spoonerising buffoon trapped in a Day-Glo pantomime of pot-bellied monsters, giant brains, alien gravel pits, hammy acting and Kate O'Mara as the Rani doing a squeaky-voiced impression of Bonnie Langford (no joke). This was everything that anyone who'd ever taken the piss out of *Doctor Who* needed for ammunition. Except, oddly, the effects were pretty good. Did that team not get the memo?

Extras: The excellent Making Of exposes the stresses and strains that conspired to make this a right Doc's dinner. There's also auditions for the Doctor, a superb feature on the effects and some fascinating behind-the-scenes material. While we could have done without Pip and Jane Baker trying to justify their dire script on the commentary, there's some fun to be had shouting down their more outrageous claims to competency. **Dave Golder**

The story was originally going to start with a "Judgement of Solomon", but the idea of baby-slicing was too much for the producer.

THE LISTENER
SEASON ONE
He knows what you're thinking, you know...

2009 • 15 • 546 mins • £19.99 • OUT NOW!

Distributor: **Universal Playback**

Creator: **Michael Amo**

Cast: **Craig Olejnik, Lisa Marcos, Ennis Esmer**

★★★ Extras:

Bob had the world's last darkroom.

You know how the original *CSI* uses brightly coloured establishing shots of Las Vegas edited together at a breakneck pace to make the city look fabulous and energetic? *The Listener* does the same thing with Toronto. The trouble is, its pretty sweeping montages of skyscrapers and the CN Tower only serve to highlight how dull the action is in comparison. Ouch.

That said, the show's got a great premise – though it's hardly an original one. Toby (Craig Olejnik) is a paramedic with a mysterious past who can read minds, which means that whenever he comes across a patient with, say, gunshot wounds, he can figure out who shot them and go looking for justice with ambulance partner Oz and [female] cop pal Charlie. Olejnik's charismatic enough as the lead and Ennis Esmer provides wisecracking back-up as Oz – the Robin to his Batman, in a sense – but the actors take too many episodes to really get comfortable with their roles, making the show a bit discombobulated at first.

The scripts aren't top-notch, either: some of the stories are mildly diverting, while others are police-procedural-by-numbers with a slightly supernatural edge. With scripting that's a bit sharper *The Listener* could rock a few socks, but at the moment it's merely plodding along in slippers.

The series managed to snag a renewal, so hopefully the writing, acting and plotting will have gelled by season two – plus there are only 13 episodes here, so it's hardly a huge investment if you want to give it a try in the meantime. If nothing else, you'll get to see how attractive Toronto looks from umpteen different angles.

Extras: Nothing – except subtitles, for those *not* so good at listening.

Jayne Nelson

The Listener was cancelled by NBC after poor ratings in the US. However, it was renewed for a second year by Canadian channel CTV.

REGION ONE ROUND-UP

OUT NOW!
STARCRASH

This 1978 *Star Wars* cash-in came out on R2 recently, but this release features loads of extras, including expert commentary and new interviews with cast and crew.

28 SEPTEMBER
ASTONISHING X-MEN: GIFTED

A motion-comic version of Joss Whedon and John Cassaday's Eisner award-winning first arc on the *X-Men* title.

LEGEND OF THE SEEKER SEASON TWO

The last 22 episodes of the New Zealand-shot fantasy series based on Terry Goodkind's The Sword Of Truth novels.

SUPERMAN/BATMAN: APOCALYPSE

Bats and Supes join forces to battle Darkseid after he kidnaps Supergirl (voiced by Summer Glau) in the latest DC Universe animation.

5 OCTOBER
CAPRICA SEASON ONE

The first nine episodes of Ronald D Moore's *Battlestar Galactica* prequel, set 58 years before the reimagined series. Over here in Blighty, we won't see this hit shiny disc until January 2011.

One man and his Cylon in *Caprica*.

MEDIUM SEASON SIX

Another 22 visions for psychic Allison DuBois. Given that season five only just came out here, don't expect this to make region two for another year.

12 OCTOBER
GHOST WHISPERER SEASON FIVE

The ever sumptuous Jennifer Love Hewitt helps restless spirits resolve their problems and cross over to the other side in the last 22 episodes of the series.

JONAH HEX

Josh Brolin plays a disfigured post-Civil War bounty hunter who can temporarily resurrect the dead in this adaptation of the DC comic.

Springsteen wowed Philadelphia one more time.

THE HORDE
Sacré bleurgh!

2009 • 18 • 93 mins • £15.99 • OUT NOW!

Distributor: **Momentum Pictures**

Directors: **Yannick Dahan, Benjamin Rocher**

Cast: **Claude Perron, Jean-Pierre Martins**

★★★☆ Extras: ★★☆

Recently, a terrifying experiment has been conducted on the other side of the Channel: the rotting, putrid corpse of French horror has been re-animated and allowed to roam the multiplexes. Films like *Martyrs*, *À L'Intérieur* and *Frontières* laugh at the watered-down rubbish that passes for modern US horror, thinking nothing of ripping open your brain case, tearing out your mind, and then doing a wee on it. Now they've turned their attention to zombies.

Sadly, the scenario isn't all that original, with cops and robbers, sworn enemies, forced to work together to escape a Parisian tower block infested with the undead. It's very much *From Dusk Till Dawn* meets *[REC]*, although in terms of ideas, it's inferior to both. If you've ever seen a zombie movie, you've got a pretty good idea of what to expect here, and if you've seen quite a few, you'll be able to pinpoint plot developments before they happen. And it's not even remotely scary.

Surprisingly, it doesn't really matter. *The Horde* is primarily interested in painting the walls red – it's an action movie first, zombie movie second. You get hand-to-hand zombie combat, machine guns, grenades, and one of the greatest last-stand-against-thousands-of-zombies scenes we've ever witnessed. This is a movie inspired more by videogames like *Left 4 Dead* or *Dead Rising* than George Romero, and that visceral energy – coupled with terrifyingly fast and powerful flesh-eaters – is just enough to make it feel fresh.

Vicious and gory, *The Horde* uses its *banlieues* setting to good effect, mixing crime, slime and grime with aplomb. Unlike its more cerebral gallic brethren however, it's content to bypass the brains and go straight for the nuts.

Extras: A Making Of, a short film, zombie concept art, storyboards, a trailer and an Easter Egg of a scene being rehearsed. **Jon Hamblin**

The Horde is far from the first French zombie movie. Check out 2003's *They Came Back* for a more considered take on the genre.

Coin hats: save you buying a purse.

TEARS FOR SALE
Sleepless in Serbia

2008 • 15 • 86 mins • £17.99 • OUT NOW!

Distributor: **Icon Home Entertainment**

Director: **Uros Stojanovic**

Cast: **Katrina Radivojevic, Sonja Kolacaric, Stefan Kapicic, Nenad Jezdic, Olivera Katarina**

★★★☆ Extras: ★

In the First World War, over a million Serbians were killed – a shocking number made even more significant by the fact that Serbia's pre-war population was only 4.5 million. More than half the men in Serbia were killed, with predictable effects on its demographics.

Less predictable, perhaps, is the scenario shown here. A remote village has been left with only one man, the elderly Grandpa Bisa, who is single-handedly "servicing" the female population. Two virgin sisters, Ognjenka and Little Boginja, accidentally cause his death, and are condemned to death themselves by the other women. In return for their lives, they promise to capture a man – any man – from elsewhere in the country and bring him back to the village. The soul of their grandmother is raised from her grave and condemned never to rest if they do not return within three days. And yes, the whole film is as crazy as it sounds.

It's hard to really know what to make of *Tears For Sale*. On one hand, it's crazy, colourful and bursting with energy. The look has clearly taken a lot of inspiration from films such as *Amelie*, and it's got a definite *Delicatessen* vibe. On the other, it's hard to feel comfortable about a film that's all about women's desperate need for a man. While you can't fault the logic – a single-sex community certainly isn't going to survive for very long – and lines like "men should stay at home and father children, and leave the women to fight" are certainly amusing, it does seem rather too much of a male fantasy to have scores of women chasing after even the most elderly, decrepit or unattractive man. In the end though, everyone seems to be having too much fun to make an accusation of misogyny seem anything but miserly.

Extras: Just a trailer. **Rhian Drinkwater**

The title comes from the profession of the two sisters – they're professional wailers who sob and shriek at funerals.

SUPERNATURAL SEASON FIVE, VOLUME TWO
A devilishly good time

2010 • 15 • 775 mins • £29.99 • OUT NOW!

A complete season five box set is out on 18 October

Distributor: **Warner Home Video**

Creator: **Eric Kripke**

Cast: **Jared Padalecki, Jensen Ackles, Misha Collins, Jim Beaver**

★★★★ Extras: ★

"A Cupid has gone rogue and we have to stop him before he kills again," exclaims a totally straight-faced Castiel during the episode "My Bloody Valentine". If you think that's not bonkers enough, wait till you clap your eyes on the other golden moment in this Valentine's Day episode, which features a sweet young couple on a date deciding to eat each other's faces off... Literally. *Supernatural*'s never shied away from gore before but this one's a bloody, flesh-tearing doozy; so deliciously gross, in fact, that we're not sure it'll ever be beaten. Round of applause, people!

Elsewhere, the series continues its merry balance of violence, humour and emo chin-wobbling in the latter half of its heavily arc-plotted fifth season, which sees Sam and Dean each fighting off the attentions of angels – Lucifer in Sam's case, the archangel Michael in Dean's. Highlights include a trip to Heaven for the brothers in "Dark Side Of The Moon" (with a fireworks display that's surely one of the show's most adorable moments), another trip back in time to the '70s in "The Song Remains The Same" and a suitably impassioned finale which sets up a curious scenario for the show's sixth year.

Best of all is *Supernatural*'s copious use of the wonderful Mark Sheppard as the gloriously sarcastic demon Crowley – and an utterly chilling scene involving Death and pizza. Could this be the darkest, craziest and most hilarious show on television? We're starting to think so.

Extras: No commentaries? No deleted scenes? Bah, humbug! Thankfully there's a massive gag reel that's a bundle of often very saucy laughs. **Meg Wilde**

The episode "My Bloody Valentine" shares its title with the remake of the 1981 slasher film that Jensen Ackles starred in last year.

Sam and Dean: not as tuneful as Pearl & Dean.

MORIBITO: GUARDIAN OF THE SPIRIT VOLUME ONE
Lavish new anime by *Ghost In The Shell* guys

2007 • 12 • 323 mins • £24.99 • OUT NOW!

Distributor: **MVM**

Director: **Kenji Kamiyama**

Cast: **Mabuki Ando, Naoto Adachi**

★★★☆ Extras: ★

The big animated telefantasies of recent years have been cultural swapovers. Japan's *Fullmetal Alchemist* was set in a European-style world, while America's *Avatar: The Last Airbender* created a fantasy Asia. This lavish new title, though, is thoroughly Japanese, from its paddy field scenery to its codes of honour and self-denial respected by characters across the social classes.

Balsa is a spear-carrying bodyguard for hire. Entering a foreign land, Balsa sees an accident in a royal procession, and saves the heir to the throne. Later, she learns from the Queen that the boy's life is threatened by his father, the Mikado (emperor), who fears that a demon has cursed the lad. Indeed, it's soon clear that the prince is supernaturally possessed. Balsa agrees to become the boy's protector, taking him under her wing.

"Avengers assemble! Oh, hang on..."

Despite being a fantasy, this is a successor of sorts to a TV cyberpunk classic, *Ghost In The Shell: Stand Alone Complex*. Made by the same studio (Production IG) and director (Kenji Kamiyama), it has similarly splendid production values, while the beautiful Balsa resembles Major Kusanagi, *Ghost*'s cyborg poster-girl. Balsa is characterised very differently from Kusanagi, but they share similar screen presences.

The opening eps are magnificent, with strong characters and relationships, plus great hand-to-hand combat scenes. Halfway through this collection, though, the story slows and dissipates the novelistic momentum with some dull filler. It'd be easier to forgive if the beginning hadn't been so terrific. It's still an impressive anime, but rather frustrating and disappointing.

Extras: Trailers. **Andrew Osmond**

Another new anime title from the same studio and director is due on DVD in November: the thriller *Eden Of The East*.

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AudioGO

MODESTY BLAISE

Total camptastrophe

1966 • 12 • 115 mins • £15.99 • OUT NOW!
Distributor: **Second Sight Films**
Director: **Joseph Losey**
Cast: **Monica Vitti, Terence Stamp, Dirk Bogarde, Harry Andrews, Michael Craig**
Extras:

On paper, at least, it's a pop-art wet dream. A live-action version of Peter O'Donnell's chic but deadly comic strip dare-dame, brought to the screen by an Oscar-winning director, fielding a cast that includes '60s ace face Terence Stamp and perfectly timed to capitalise on the all-devouring spy boom ignited by the Bond movies.

So why is watching *Modesty Blaise* such a chore?

True, there's a bloody wonderful title song, one of those sunlit, ba-ba-ba-stacked confections that convinces you everyone once ran through Carnaby Street with hearts soaring like Concorde ("She'll turn your head, though she may use a judo hold!"). But that's about all this film has in its favour, unless you have a taste for camp-drenched big-screen misfires.

It certainly doesn't help that Monica Vitti is fundamentally miscast as Modesty. Where O'Donnell's creation was an icily elegant heroine of mysterious Eurasian extraction, all killer curves and compass-carved cheekbones, Vitti's fractured English and playful manner suggest nothing so much as a bored jetsetter's wife. She's also blonde for the majority of her screentime, only donning the iconic beehive and catsuit in a weird postmodern scene that feels like Modesty playing dress-up in her own cartoon image.

With an insanely effete performance from Dirk Bogarde as master villain Gabriel (at one point he sips from a colossal wine glass with a goldfish bobbing at the bottom), a plot that curdles rather than thickens, non-sequitur dialogue and a dreary, disconnected pace, it ranks as a great missed opportunity. Hum that majestic title tune and just imagine what the Bond team could have made of this material at the height of their powers.

Extras: None. Nick Setchfield

FACT ME!
MODESTY BLAISE

- Modesty Blaise was originally created by Peter O'Donnell and Jim Holdaway, with the strip making its debut in the London *Evening Standard* on 13 May 1962.
- The final strip ran on 11 April 2001, with Modesty vowing to "take a little break".
- While O'Donnell wrote the original screenplay for the 1966 movie, the final version contained little of his creative input.
- He also wrote 11 Modesty novels and two collections of short stories.
- Modesty returned to the screen – now Americanised – in a 1982 TV pilot, while 2002's *My Name Is Modesty* was another unsuccessful cinematic version, starring Alexandra Staden.

The conjoined twins ticked all Captain Jack's boxes.

WOT, NO DVD?
Someone release this!

Seconds later this would be a photo of a wall.

GEMINI MAN
TV SERIES • 1976

NBC's 1975 bash at *The Invisible Man* – the one with David McCallum in the lead role – only lasted a single series before cancellation, but executive producer Harve Bennett (who went on to produce many of the best *Star Trek* films) was determined to keep the concept going.

And so *Gemini Man* was born, a more action-orientated take on HG Wells's idea, starring Ben Murphy as Sam Casey, a government agent who, following a diving accident, became invisible. He had control over his invisibility thanks to a nifty wrist watch, but could only become unseen for 11 minutes a day. Because of his job this came in rather handy although – yawn – with a lot of risk thrown in. Unfortunately it wasn't exciting enough for the masses, and after the pilot only five episodes were transmitted, rather than all 11 that were produced.

All the more reason, then, for a DVD revival of the show, which was always more fun and less melancholy than the McCallum one. For proof, try the episode 'Night Train To Dallas', where Sam acts as bodyguard to a women's swimming team!

[REC] 2

What possessed them?

2009 • 18 • 81 mins • £17.99 • OUT NOW!
Also available on Blu-ray (£22.99)
Distributor: **E1 Entertainment**
Directors: **Jaume Balagueró, Paco Plaza**
Cast: **Jonathan Mellor, Manuela Velasco**
★★★½ Extras: ★½

If you're a fan of the original *[REC]*, whether or not you'll be able to stomach this sequel isn't a matter of format – this is no *Blair Witch 2*, that shrugs off its old skin to reveal a more conventional shape.

Following on immediately from the events of its predecessor, this follow-up to the Spanish not-really-zombies horror takes us back into the apartment building that's the centre of a viral outbreak, once again using found-footage trickery to foster a sense of verisimilitude. Those techniques – hand-held camerawork, temporary sound drop-outs, intermittent freezing or distortion of the image – work just as well second time around, and with its slow build-ups of tension followed by sudden bursts of hyper-violence, *[REC] 2* has all the raw immediacy of its forebear. Only a sequence featuring a helmet-cam view is a questionable choice, momentarily making you feel like you've been dropped into a game of *Doom*. Ironically, a technique developed to make videogames feel more immersive now has the opposite effect; feeling overly *fictional*, it rudely yanks you out of the moment.

The nursery had controversial policies.

No, acceptance depends on one thing: whether you welcome the broadening out of the franchise's mythology. The mysteriousness of the infection was part of the original movie's appeal – although there were hints. Here, its exact nature is laid out in unambiguous terms, in a film that has more in common with *The Exorcist* than it does with *Night Of The Living Dead*. The more we learn about the infection and what it can do, the more bat's-arse the film becomes. Some will reject these developments as absurd. We say embrace the madness – at least it's new territory for a subgenre in which invention is all too rare.

Extras: Just seven mins of extended and deleted scenes. Ian Berriman

Two more *[REC]* films are in the pipeline: Paco Plaza will direct *[REC] Genesis*, with Jaume Balagueró directing *[REC] Apocalypse*.

RIN: DAUGHTERS OF MNEMOSYNE

Anime gets naughty again

2008 • 18 • 260 mins • £19.99 • OUT NOW!
Distributor: **Manga Entertainment**
Director: **Shigeru Ueda**
Cast: **Mamiko Noto, Rie Kugimiya, Nobuyuki Hiyama**
★★★★½ Extras: ★

In Britain, it took anime a long time to live down its early reputation as "those porno Japanese cartoons". The Studio Ghibli movies helped, as did hit franchises from *Naruto* to *Death Note*, and the rise of younger fans for whom *Urotsukidoji* was just a strange set of letters. Now we have a new naughty, sometimes pervy anime, and it happens to be very good.

Torchwood fans should find the set-up familiar. The beautiful bisexual protagonist, Rin, is killed frequently and spectacularly but always comes back to life, having turned immortal years earlier (how many years we only learn at the end). She knows there are deadly creatures among us, though her turf isn't Cardiff but Shinjuku, one of Tokyo's central districts. As the plot develops, it becomes clear all the weird phenomena, including Rin's condition, are bound up with the fabulous tree she sees towering in the sky, the tree of Yggdrasil...

"Just... can't... spell... Mnemosyne..."

Yes, there's dodgy material, some involving Rin's *very* young-looking girly companion and fellow immortal, and the sadistic tortures Rin endures as an occupational hazard (her piercing in part one is especially nasty). And yet, it's an engrossing story that makes splendid use of its serial format (a six-part mini-series). The successive instalments skip forward from the '90s to the 2050s as some players age and others don't – a familiar trick in prose SF, but hard to pull off well on screen. The story is increasingly integrated and inventive, and the final payoffs are genuinely satisfying.

Mnemosyne works because it's smart as well as kinky. Oh, and it has cannibal angels...

Extras: Dub team commentary on one episode. Andrew Osmond

Rin's cute assistant Mimi is voiced by Rie Kugimiya, who voiced Alphonse Elric in the more wholesome *Fullmetal Alchemist* franchise.

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He wasn't the ideal choice for a lipstick seller.

BEYOND THE RAVE

2008 • 18 • 97 mins • £12.99 • OUT NOW!

★★ Extras: ★★★½

It's a shame this was the first product of the revived Hammer, not the forthcoming *Let Me In* – the brand deserves a better milestone.

This 20-episode web-serial yokes vampires with the bang-up-to-date concept of illegal raves. It has its moments: a "blood harvesting" sequence is quease-inducing, and there are neat flourishes, like blood vibrating on a speaker as a DJ's killed. Shame the script is such a mess.

The real stake in the heart is the presence of East End hardman Tamer Hasan as a drug dealer, tediously bellowing endless variations on "yew fackin mag". Still, at least Danny Dyer's not in it...

Extras: Two commentaries, bonus episode, Making Of, "character clips", bonus scenes, gallery. Calvin Baxter

Kate Moss loved playing soldiers.

ARMY OF THE DEAD

2008 • 15 • 90 mins • £12.99 • OUT NOW!

★½ Extras:

Nope, it's not another unloved Romero sequel. Instead, this bargain bin horror is all about that lesser-spotted Deadite, the living skeleton. When a fella goes VW racing in the desert, he accidentally becomes embroiled in the hunt for some cursed Anasazi gold. Cue undead hordes on the rampage...

The skellies, when they show up, are actually pretty cool. Sadly there's 40 numbing minutes of getting to know the cardboard characters first. The thin plot involves moving from one place to another while shouting, and everything is resolved with a hilariously implausible spot of last-minute MacGyvering. Dull, stupid and overly fond of CGI; call this Operation Desert Yawn.

Extras: None. Will Salmon

He regretted going to Linda Blair's opticians.

SPLINTERED

2008 • 18 • 81 mins • £12.99 • OUT NOW!

★★ Extras: ★★

Oh goodie, another low-budget horror featuring a bunch of kids wandering around in the woods. They're looking for a Welsh equivalent of the Beast Of Bodmin. What they find's a derelict boarding school and a snarling chap who may be a werewolf, or may be crackers. If only there was a clue in the title...

It's the type of film where people yell lines like, "Stop being a geek" and "You're a spoilt shit!" to establish character, and carry around folders of expository newspaper cuttings, and it makes infuriatingly cheap use of child abuse as a major plot point. Don't expect scares, either – unless someone banging on a door and roaring gives you incontinence.

Extras: Eleven featurettes, deleted scenes, animatic and storyboard, trailers. Ian Berriman

The avocado prawn starter went down well.

DEAD CERT

2010 • 18 • 90 mins • £15.99 • 27 September

★★½ Extras: ★★½

It's gangsters vs vampires in this low-budget Brit horror, which only punches above its weight cast-wise.

Freddie (Craig Fairbrass) opens a lapdancing club with fellow crim Eddie (Dexter Fletcher). It's soon targeted by vampire Dante Livenko (*The Bill*'s Billy Murray), because it's built on "sacred ground". The horror is a while coming and when it does arrive it's somewhat restrained – the director never cuts loose or ramps up the savagery. And for a film set in a lapdancing club, how odd that there's zero nudity. Also featuring Steven Berkoff chewing the scenery as a vamp hunter and Danny Dyer in the most hilariously brief of cameos, *Dead Cert* lacks the balls or budget to build on its promising scenario.

Extras: Commentary, Making Of (30 mins) and trailer. Russell Lewin

COMING SOON

RELEASE DATES MAY CHANGE

4 OCTOBER

THE CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF Oliver Reed is the lycanthrope in this 1961 Hammer horror.

DOCTOR WHO: REVISITATIONS ONE A box set of three old releases – "The Talons Of Weng Chiang", "The Caves Of Androzani" and the Paul McGann TV movie – remastered with new extras.

FANBOYS *Star Wars* fans head to Skywalker Ranch to steal a pre-release copy of *The Phantom Menace* in this geeky comedy.

HEROES SEASON FOUR The last 18 episodes of the super-powered drama that lost its mojo.

THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE (FIRST SEQUENCE) A mad surgeon stitches three people together bum to mouth in this gruesome horror...

SANCTUARY SEASON TWO Thirteen more instalments of the Canadian show about a team which tries to protect and learn from "abnormals".

SMALLVILLE SEASON NINE A young Zod is the Big Bad for the latest 21 episodes of the Super-series.

11 OCTOBER

BIG TITS ZOMBIE Strippers battle zombies after discovering a Book of the Dead and reviving the undead.

DOLLHOUSE SEASON TWO The final 13 instalments of Joss Whedon's mind-wipe drama.

NIGHT OF THE DEMONS Demons try to possess guests at a Halloween party in this remake of a 1988 horror.

SUCK Rock 'n' roll vampire musical, featuring Alice Cooper, Moby and Iggy Pop.

30 DAYS OF NIGHT: DARK DAYS The sole survivor of the Barrow massacre sets out to get revenge on the vampire queen to blame.

VIDEO NASTIES: THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE This three-disc set includes a new documentary, and trailers for all 72 infamous films.

18 OCTOBER

DARK SKIES All 19 episodes of the '60s-set conspiracy show from 1996, which mixed real historical events with an alien takeover plot.

LOST BOYS: THE THIRST The Frog Brothers take on an army of vamps who take a drug which mixes ecstacy and vampire blood.

NIGHT OF THE DEMON Classic British horror from 1957, an adaptation of MR James's story "Casting The Runes".

THE SARAH JANE ADVENTURES SERIES THREE A Judoon, a come-to-life Mona Lisa and the Tenth Doctor feature in 12 more episodes of the *Doctor Who* spin-off.

A TOWN CALLED EUREKA SEASON 3.5 Another ten episodes of the show set in a top-secret community full of boffins.

V SEASON ONE Enjoyably risible remake of the '80s saga about alien "Visitors" who are actually lizards.

25 OCTOBER

THE AVENGERS SERIES FIVE The series moves into colour for the last year of Emma Peel adventures.

DOCTOR WHO: THE SEEDS OF DOOM The Doctor battles a deadly alien plant in this gritty Tom Baker six-parter.

IRON MAN 2 Tony Stark butts heads with Mickey Rourke's vengeful Whiplash.

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET Jackie Earle Haley is Freddy Krueger in this new remake.

POSSESSION Sam Neill discovers his wife has made a tentacled creature her lover in this bizarre and unpleasant 1981 video nasty.

STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS SEASON TWO Another 22 episodes of the animated spin-off.

THE TICK LIST

THE BEST RECENT DVDS. GOT THEM YET?

1	NE	**KICK-ASS** Schmuck turns superhero in Mark Millar comic adap.	★★★★★
2	NE	**DAUGHTERS OF DARKNESS** Countess Bathory returns in 1971 erotic thriller.	★★★★★
3	NE	**LOST** season six Great *if* you don't expect any real answers...	★★★★½
4	NE	**DOCTOR WHO** series five, volume four "Vincent And The Doctor" to "The Big Bang".	★★★★½
5	▼	**SOUL EATER** volume one Witty, stylish anime fight show.	★★★★½
6	NE	**GOING POSTAL** Conman runs post office in Discworld adap.	★★★★
7	NE	**BATMAN: UNDER THE RED HOOD** The latest DC animated movie.	★★★★
8	▼	**ASHES TO ASHES** series three It's dust to dust for the Gene Genie.	★★★★
9	▼	**DOCTOR WHO** series five, volume two Weeping Angels and fish from space.	★★★★
10	▼	**THE AVENGERS** series four Diana Rigg's Emma Peel arrives.	★★★★

THE RULES: New releases push down old releases. DVDs drop out of the chart after three months.

"When I said I wanted a love bite..."

HIGANJIMA: ESCAPE FROM VAMPIRE ISLAND

It's about a day's sailing from Monster Island...

2009 • 18 • 120 mins • £15.99 • 4 October

Also available on Blu-ray (£19.99)

Distributor: **Manga Entertainment**

Director: **Kim Tae-Gyun**

Cast: **Hideo Ishiguro, Dai Watanabe, Koji Yamamoto**

★★★☆ Extras:

This isn't much of a vampire film, and even less of a horror picture, but it is a rather rousing live-action manga adventure yarn. It's one third *Battle Royale*, one third *Shonen Jump* and one third Ray Harryhausen fantasy.

A naive Japanese schoolboy encounters a femme fatale, who tells of a secret island where he can find his missing brother. His friends insist on coming along too, despite all the blood-drinking monsters.

The film's big shortcoming is its increasingly predictable course. Yet, with a sound plot hook and feisty fights, it's enjoyably well-staged manga fare, even when it's ticking all the boxes (distressed damsel, hidden resistance movement and so on). Some may find it overlong and earnest, but anyone with an affection for operatically protracted manga epics should take that in their stride.

Extras: A three-part Making Of (45 mins) and six interviews (22 mins).

Andrew Osmond

Dai Watanabe (who plays the lost brother) is the son of Ken Watanabe, best known in the West for his role in *The Last Samurai*.

The most bizarre star combo ever?

TOOTH FAIRY

Can you handle the tooth?

2010 • PG • 97 mins • £19.99 • OUT NOW!

Also available on Blu-ray (£28.99)

Distributor: **20th Century Fox Home Entertainment**

Director: **Michael Lembeck**

Cast: **Dwayne Johnson, Ashley Judd**

★★☆☆ Extras: ★☆☆☆

So, um, right, this is about a hockey player nicknamed the Tooth Fairy because he knocks out people's teeth, but then – get this – he has to work as a real tooth fairy, sneaking into bedrooms and swapping teeth for money. Oh, and he's played by Dwayne Johnson – you know, The Rock. *The Scorpion King*? Yes, him. And the guy out of *Extras* is an admin fairy with "wing envy".

Must have been a heck of a pitch to get this made.

And that's pretty much all that's here. Johnson's hockey player is past his prime, arrogant and self-obsessed, seeing younger, better players come up and write him off as an old-timer. He wants to make it in hockey again, his fairy guide (Stephen Merchant) wants to be a real tooth fairy, and his girlfriend's son wants to be a rock star. Come watch as they all work towards realising their dreams.

The tragedy is that there are some genuinely funny jokes here that are completely wasted. As is the roster of guest stars.

Extras: Tooth fairy exercise videos, a gag reel, deleted scenes and a *very* strange duet. **Rhian Drinkwater**

The rise in tooth prices has far outstripped inflation – from 10p a tooth in the '80s to £1.15 by 2009.

Nathan's passport photo pushed the limit.

DEFENDOR

Woody but no buzz

2009 • 15 • 97 mins • £13.99 • OUT NOW!

Distributor: **Sony Pictures Home Entertainment**

Director: **Peter Stebbings**

Cast: **Woody Harrelson, Elias Koteas, Kat Dennings**

★★★☆ Extras: ★★★☆

Matthew Vaughn probably thought he was breaking new ground bringing amateur heroics to the big screen with *Kick-Ass*. Turns out he was beaten to the punch by *Defendor* – a similarly themed superhero spoof that substitutes in-your-face attitude for lofty dramatics. It's *Kick-Ass* without the balls.

Woody Harrelson stars as the titular man-child masked vigilante, who stalks the night armed with a wooden club, marbles and jars of wasps. His whimsical performance is a treat, but doesn't gel with the film's more serious themes of inner city crime and mental disability.

Despite the starry cast it's a modest film, with plenty of heart and occasionally brilliant flashes – like the blundering action sequences or poignant final pay-off. Attempts to deconstruct the superhero genre fall flat, however, due to broad stroke character types and an uneventful script. It pulls its punches, but if you found *Kick-Ass* too knowing or mean-spirited then *Defendor* will make a pleasing alternative.

Extras: Cast and crew commentary, behind-the-scenes featurettes, out-takes and deleted scenes.

Jordan Farley

Ellen Page was originally set to star, before dropping out to film *Inception*. She's next in James Gunn's similar-sounding *Super*.

The first day on the beach was Kevin's worst.

HUNTER PREY

The pursuit of crappiness

2009 • 15 • 84 mins • £12.99 • OUT NOW!

Distributor: **Kaleidoscope Home Entertainment**

Director: **Sandy Collora**

Cast: **Damion Poitier, Clark Bartram**

★★☆☆ Extras: ★★★☆

You may not remember the name, but you've probably seen Sandy Collora's work – he's the guy behind internet sensation *Dead End*, a Batman vs Alien vs Predator short. Sadly, seven years on, his feature debut proves as exciting as a cul-de-sac.

It follows a squad of three troopers as they pursue an escaped prisoner on a desert world. Well, there are three to start with – pretty soon it's a *mano-a-mano* deal. But while hunter and prey do eventually communicate, this is no *Enemy Mine*.

The production values are impressive – especially the hunters' Boba Fett-ish helmets and the alien make-up. Good score too, reminiscent of *Planet Of The Apes*. But that's not enough to make up for the hokey dialogue and endless footage of people tramping around the arse-end of Mexico. Collora says he hopes the story will inspire viewers to think about war, politics and current events, but unless the notion that genocide is A Bad Thing comes as a revelation, your grey matter is unlikely to be stimulated.

Extras: A director's commentary, Making Of (28 mins) and trailer.

Calvin Baxter

The two leads had a farting contest throughout filming. One morning, one of them farted on the other's head while he slept.

DVD ROUNDUP

BLUE THUNDER: THE SERIES

1984 • PG • 288 mins • £29.99 • 27 September

This 11-episode spin-off of the 1983 movie stars James Farentino as the grizzled pilot of the titular chopper, an armour-plated number with silent "whisper mode", thermal imaging cameras and the inevitable "turbo boost". A pre-*Saturday Night Live* Dana Carvey provides comedy relief as co-pilot Clinton Wonderlove. Pitting Blue Thunder against nefarious jet plane-owning KGB types and drug runners amidst a welter of stock footage, it's typically cornball *A-Team*-style '80s action fare.

RADAR MEN FROM THE MOON

1952 • PG • 194 mins • £5.99 • OUT NOW!

This 12-part Republic serial sees the heroic Commander Cody (no, not the *Star Wars* clone trooper...) investigating a series of explosions at military bases and the like, which turn out to part of an invasion plan by Retik, evil dictator of the Moon. Recycling an awful lot of footage from 1949's *King Of The Rocket Men* and 1945's *The Purple Monster Strikes*, it's an inferior, penny-pinching effort with an undermanned cast and a terribly wooden star.

BLOOD SNOW

2009 • 15 • 113 mins • £12.99 • 27 September

Heard of the Donner party? A bunch of mid-19th century pioneers who set off to California, they ended up snowbound in the mountains, some resorting to cannibalism to survive. In this DTV horror, six friends holidaying at a remote cabin are trapped by a snowstorm and one (*Heroes*' James Kyson-Lee) is possessed by their spirits... or is it just cabin fever? You'll struggle to care – the scenery's impressive, but the script stinks. Eighties popstrel Tiffany also features, and Michael "*The Hills Have Eyes*" Berryman has a cameo.

MEGA SHARK IN MALIBU

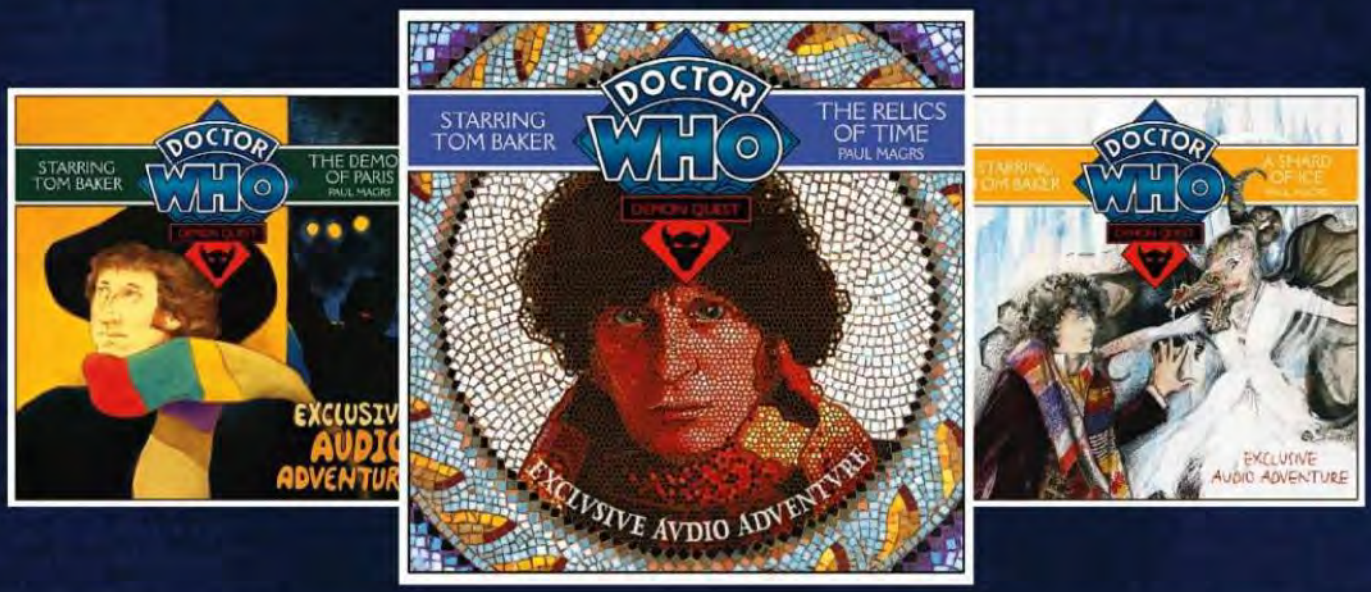
2009 • 15 • 86 mins • £9.99 • OUT NOW!

Surprisingly *not* the product of the people behind *Mega Shark Vs Giant Octopus*, this is instead a Syfy TV movie (*Malibu Shark Attack*) that's been cunning retitled. There's no Megalodon in it, but there are six prehistoric goblin sharks. Peta Wilson plays one of the lifeguards whose tower is left surrounded by these aquatic nasties after a tsunami puts Malibu beach 30 feet underwater. Basically it's *Baywatch* meets *Deep Blue Sea*, with all the intelligence that implies.

More at ebook-free-download.net or magazinesdownload.com

DEMON QUEST

Come With Us On A Journey...



One year on from Hornets' Nest, the Doctor returns with Mrs Wibbsey and Mike Yates for five further adventures written by Paul Magrs…

1. The Relics of Time - 2 September
2. The Demon of Paris - 7 October
3. A Shard of Ice - 4 November
4. Starfall - 2 December
5. Sepulchre - 2 December

Starring TOM BAKER with Susan Jameson and Richard Franklin,

and a guest cast including Samuel West, Jan Francis, Lorelei King, Nigel Anthony and many more

Also available a fantastic box set containing all five stories on CD in the Hornets' Nest series, each title available to download individually

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AudioGO

Sailors: shag anything.

FORBIDDEN PLANET

Shakespeare in space

1956 • U • 98 mins • £17.99 • OUT NOW!
Distributor: **Warner Home Video**
Director: **Fred McLeod Wilcox**
Cast: **Walter Pidgeon, Leslie Nielsen, Anne Francis**
★★★★½ Extras: ★★★★★

Forbidden Planet may be a landmark SF movie, up there in the pantheon of all-time greats... but it's by no means perfect.

The story sees a spaceship crew investigating how only Dr Morbius (Walter Pidgeon) and daughter Altaira (Anne Francis) have escaped being torn limb from limb by some unknown force on Altair IV. Transposing *The Tempest* to outer space and adding a pinch of Freud, it's an intriguing mystery. What's a shame is how little information is *discovered*; instead, the story's nudged forward by infodumps. All that's left for Commander Adams (Leslie Nielsen, a world away from *The Naked Gun* with his matinee idol looks and stern demeanour) to do is join the dots. And the characterisation of Altaira, an implausibly naïve, micro-skirted virgin, is dreadfully dated.

The eye candy overcomes such shortcomings. It's a film crammed with iconic imagery, from its gorgeous flying saucer to Robby the Robot, the waddling, Jeeves-voiced offspring of an adding machine and the Michelin Man. And no score has ever transported the viewer to an alien world as completely as Louis and Bebe Barron's electronic burbles, throbs and farts.

Extras: "Watch The Skies: SF, The 1950s And Us" (55 mins), a 2005 docu, is remarkably starry: think *I Love '50s SF Movies*, but with Spielberg, Cameron and Lucas, not Gina Yashere... Further impressive names feature on a film-specific retrospective (26 mins). Robby the Robot gets a dedicated featurette (13 mins), and we see the prop's further appearances in TV show *The Thin Man* and feature *The Invisible Boy* – yes, one extra is a *whole other movie*! Effects test footage, promos, trailers and some fascinating deleted scenes complete an impressive selection – though all of it was on the DVD release. **Ian Berriman**

Robby's other on-screen credits include *Lost In Space*, *Twilight Zone*, *The Addams Family*, *The Man From UNCLE* and a 1974 *Columbo*!

"Hurry – I can't blow this saliva bubble forever!"

MARS ATTACKS!

1996 • 12 • 105 mins • £17.99 • OUT NOW!
★★★ Extras:

Trading card adaptations are something of a novelty. It's understandable, then, that *Mars Attacks!* (based on the 1962 Topps series), has such a paper-thin plot: bulbous-brained Martians invade Earth while a big-name cast run about like headless chickens.

A B-movie alien invasion spoof with a blockbuster budget, the film's offbeat sight gags are frequently funny, but can also be unpleasantly cynical. As *Independence Day* proved the same year, a little sincerity can go a long way.

Tim Burton may have been shooting for cult classic by emulating Ed Wood's naff '50s sci-fi schlock, but in doing such a good job he created a film just as disappointing.

Extras: None. **Jordan Farley**

[REC]

Neighbours from hell

2007 • 18 • 75 mins • £19.99 • OUT NOW!
Distributor: **E1 Entertainment**
Directors: **Jaume Balagueró, Paco Plaza**
Cast: **Manuela Velasco, Ferran Terraza, Jorge-Yaman Serrano, Pablo Rosso, David Vert**
★★★ Extras: ★★★

The Blair Witch Project may have been first off the blocks but it wasn't until 2008 that the shaky-cam craze temporarily became a motion-sickness-inducing fixture at UK cinemas, with *Cloverfield*, *Diary Of The Dead* and *[REC]* released mere months apart. Despite its lower profile, the festival-favourite Spanish chiller had the longest battery life, better exploiting the flash-in-the-pan format than its hand-held brethren, and landing a ferocious, panic-stricken shot to the jugular that'll ensure you never enter a block of flats without a zombie attack contingency plan again.

The set-up is simple – a TV news crew and the team of fire-fighters they're tailing get trapped in a grimy multi-story apartment block which happens to be ground zero for a viral outbreak. Rather than Romero's shambling undead, these zombies are of the frenzied *28 Days Later* ilk: rabid, relentless, sub-primal and a crucial factor in the film's nerve-shredding terror.

Dirty tea towels made her *livid*.

Running at a breathless, unremitting pace (after ten minutes or so reserved for the obligatory getting-to-know-you opening) the film whips up an escalating whirlwind of terror through the smart use of sparse diegetic sound (there's no score), startlingly effective jump scares, a callous approach to life, buckets of gore and the creepiest closing sequence committed to celluloid in years.

It trips up the same way other "found footage" films do – every time the characters pause for breath you ask who in their right mind would still be recording, but *[REC]* suffers less than most simply because it's so unrelenting and unforgiving.

Extras: Nothing you haven't seen before if you own the DVD – a 40-minute Making Of, interview snippets, deleted scenes and trailers. **Jordan Farley**

Paco Plaza says he's hugely influenced by *The Living Dead At Manchester Morgue*. Read our review of that here: tinyurl.com/mancmorgue.

DEATH NOTE/ DEATH NOTE 2

Step away from that pencil!

2006 • 15 • 262 mins • £24.99 • OUT NOW!
Distributor: **4Digital Asia**
Director: **Shusuke Kaneko**
Cast: **Tatsuya Fujiwara, Ken'ichi Matsuyama, Erika Toda, Shido Nakamura**
★★★½ Extras:

If you're new to *Death Note*, it helps to see it as yet another reworking of Sherlock Holmes. Present-day Tokyo is the backdrop for a war of wits between two super-geniuses, one on the side of law and order, the other a mass-murdering megalomaniac. However, the story's told from the viewpoint of the "Moriarty" character, a precocious youngster called Light Yagami who's armed with a magic notebook donated by a cackling, leering God of Death. If Light knows your name and face, he writes them in the Death Note and – blam! – you're pretty soon history. Criminals are his prey, but so is anyone else who interferes with his plans for world domination. Unfortunately, he doesn't know the true name of L, the owl-like albino detective on his trail, so let battle commence!

These two feature films comprise the live-action version of the *Death Note* manga megahit. It's a great concept and a strong story. The snag is the level of borderline-panto camp. *Death Note* deserves an adaptation on the lines of *The Dark Knight*, but this is closer to the Adam West *Batman* without the comic-book colours. The manga characters just look too *silly* in live-action, and their broad performances lack the brooding that the drama demands.

Everyone loves Google Street View.

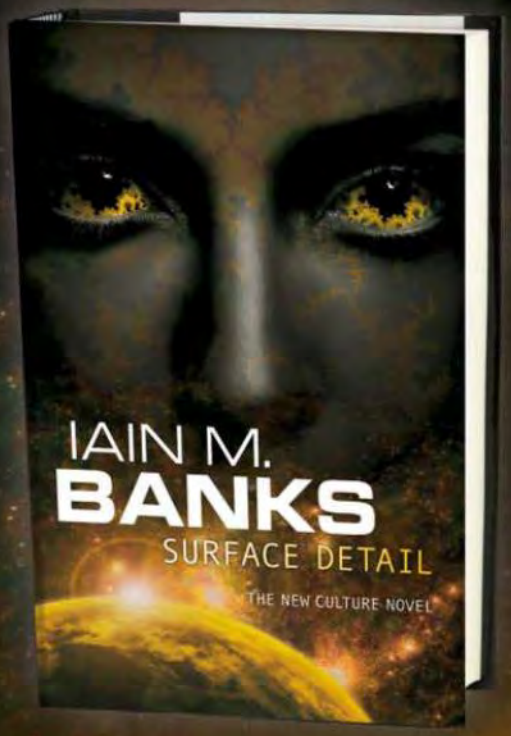
Yet if you can live with that, it's great fun – especially if you know the other versions of the story. This doesn't pretend to be a literal adaptation (for example, Light is introduced as a college student, not a schoolboy) with several fiendish new plot twists and a radically changed ending. We still want a Christopher Nolan version, though.

Extras: A Making Of, production diary and press conference footage, all previously available on DVD. **Andrew Osmond**

Warner Brothers have the rights to a US *Death Note* remake, which would reportedly be based on the first three volumes of the manga.

More at ebook-free-download.net or magazinesdownload.com

Murder Revenge and Special Circumstances



Welcome back to the Culture.

Available on the iPhone App Store

Download the free Iain Banks iPhone app.
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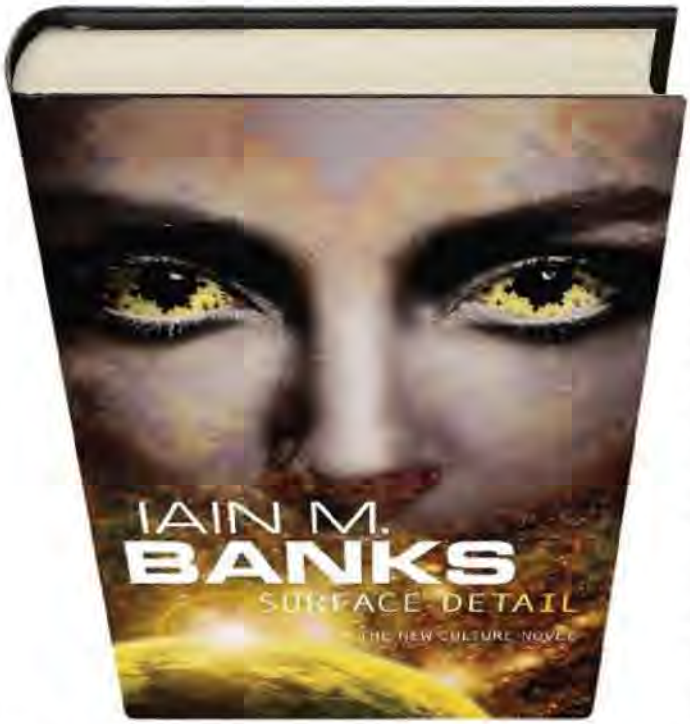


SURFACE DETAIL

Life after death can be any number of Hells in Iain M Banks's the Culture

Author: **Iain M Banks**
Publisher: **Orbit** • **488 pages** • **£18.99**
ISBN: **978-1-84149-893-5** • **7 October**

★★★★

"All hope abandon ye who enter here," Dante warns us as we begin our descent through his nine circles of Hell in *La Divina Commedia*. But in Iain M Banks's latest Culture novel, it's not letting go of hope that's the real Hell. While there's hope, there's suffering.

At which point it would be great to perform an old piece of reviewing prestidigitation and go, "And you'll give up all hope of ever getting to the end of this novel." Ho ho ho. Sadly, Banksie thwarts this gift of a joke by delivering one of the most entertaining Culture novels for a long time.

This is the Culture's take on *The Divine Comedy*, with characters subjected to virtual Hells made possible by what is in effect soul transference technology. That may all sound just a tad heavy, but surprisingly it isn't. Not in the slightest.

Banks makes his views on religion clear pretty early on: it's opium for the masses – a necessary but spurious social construct to keep people sane – but in this case, opium has been updated to an infernal form of Second Life. So this isn't a book with much new to say in terms of philosophy and the human need to believe in something. Neither does it spend much time examining the ennui or the theological issues resulting from artificially extending life (or death).

Nope, this is a space opera, good and proper, with political power struggles, space battles, bizarre aliens and lasers. It's probably Banks's most straightfowardly out-and-out adventure Culture novel since *The Player Of Games*. And yes, there's a character with revenge at their heart.

Having said that, it has one structural drawback that prevents it having the same kind of gosh-wow, visceral impact as *The Player Of Games* or *Look To Windward*. There are just too many ideas, spread over too many plot lines.

There's Lededje, a tattooed slave murdered by the evil boss of a mega-successful games software company. The unknowing recipient of some soul transference tech, she's surprised to wake up in virtual afterlife, then quickly downloads herself into a new body and sets off to kill her murderer. There's the war taking place between the pro-Hell and anti-Hell factions on a virtual battlefield (though threatening to spread into "the real"). There's a pair of two-trunked aliens who willingly enter one of the Hells undercover to prove it's all a big con. And finally, there's a cartel of shifty aliens (including the aforementioned software boss) who plan to hijack the war, and blame the fall-out on the Culture.

These stories do all dovetail (eventually, and quite cleverly) but Banks flits between them rather erratically, meaning that each plotline struggles to build a head of steam until well into the novel. And with so many ideas all fighting for space, there are some stodgy moments of infodumping early on; they come across a bit like one of those The Book monologues from *Hitchhiker's*, but without the jokes.

Opium has been updated to an infernal form of Second Life

Nevertheless, *Surface Detail* remains a lot of fun, with some great new ship names and droids to add to the Culture pantheon, and a cast of vivid, idiosyncratic characters. There's plenty of evocative, bravura prose (especially in the virtual war sequences), plus the standard Banksian witty dialogue and weirdness (including a war committee who meet on trapezes).

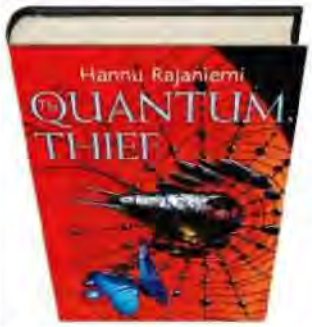
It's Iain M Banks giving us what we expect from Iain M Banks. Even if he does occasionally seem to be writing in second gear, when he shifts into first, he's unstoppable.

Dave Golder

DNA SCAN

- *The Matrix* – 30%
- The Night's Dawn Trilogy – 30%
- *The Divine Comedy* – 20%
- *Inferno* (Niven/Pournelle) – 14%
- Microsoft – 6%

Iain M Banks routinely settles down to write for the first half of the year – which explains his absence from February's *SFX* Weekender.



THE QUANTUM THIEF

Much-hyped hard-SF debut that's worthy of the fuss

Author: **Hannu Rajaniemi**
Publisher: **Gollancz** • **448 pages** • **£18.99**
ISBN: **978-0-575-08887-0** • **30 September**
Also available in paperback (£12.99)

★★★★½

Hailing from Finland, Hannu Rajaniemi first came to the UK to study physics at Cambridge. Eventually landing up in Edinburgh, he began to write SF in English, his second language. Fast forward a few years – via time in the same Edinburgh writing group as Charles Stross and Alan Campbell – and Rajaniemi's debut novel arrives amidst the kind of fanfare that means it has to be one of the novels of the year, or risk being dismissed as a disappointment.

Happily, *The Quantum Thief* more than delivers, as Rajaniemi spins a yarn that ties old-fashioned adventure to cutting-edge science fiction without this ever seeming contrived. Its protagonist is Jean le Flambeur, a gentleman thief. We meet le Flambeur in jail, where his punishment is constantly to play out different variations on the prisoner's dilemma. Help comes in the form of Mieli and her spaceship, Perhonen, who offer freedom in return for securing Rajaniemi's services.

The job is on Mars, but this isn't a Red Planet anything like that imagined by Kim Stanley Robinson. Instead, it's far closer to the magic realism-infused Mars that Ian McDonald created for *Desolation Road*, a place of eerie post-humans and digitally stored personalities, where the concept of a fixed identity too often slides away at a crucial moment. That's especially true in the case of le Flambeur, a man who apparently doesn't even trust himself.

If this sounds confusing, it should probably be added that *Quantum Thief* is one of those books you want to read again, just to make sure you've truly understood it. A bad thing? Not when you want to do so straight after finishing the final page. The science fiction debut of the year, no contest. Jonathan Wright

The Quantum Thief was written quickly: "The core parts of the book were basically written over a period of seven weeks," says Rajaniemi.

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HOW TO LIVE SAFELY IN A SCIENCE FICTIONAL UNIVERSE

It's all about daddy issues

Author: **Charles Yu**

Publisher: **Corvus** • **234 pages** • **£12.99**

ISBN: **978-1-84887-680-4** • **1 October**

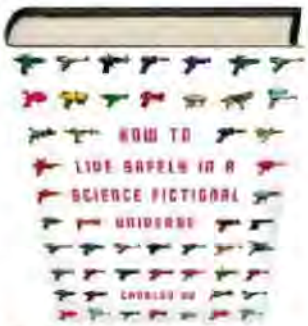
★★★★

This year's *The Time Traveler's Wife*? That's surely what Corvus wants from this book; the blurb from Audrey Niffenegger is a dead giveaway. While the two tales share similarities, Yu's debut novel is a more complex beast, unashamed to drown the reader in scientific jargon.

Charles Yu (our hero, not the author) is a time machine repairman in the damaged Minor Universe 31, composed of 17% reality and 83% science fiction, whose inhabitants have been left with a "lingering sense of incompleteness". He's searching for his father, who stepped into his own time machine and vanished one day, and in its exploration of nostalgia and sadness for things long gone – not least the peculiar relationship between a boy and his dad – this novel is, at times, almost unbearably moving.

It's also like standing between two mirrors and watching your reflection curve into infinity. There are echoes everywhere. Time travel is likened to grammar and storytelling in its rules and tenses. The book you are reading is the actual book that's written as the story unfolds – the book a future version of Charles Yu give to his past self before he's shot. The science of time travel is also the science of regret, we're told, as people invariably use time machines first and foremost to try to alter their own past. It's all linked, and dizzying.

Yu's plainly thought long and hard about the mechanics of time travel, and even managed to crack the ontological paradox nut. In doing so, he's not only delivered a fascinating slice of pure SF, he's remembered that all this science and all this technology is used only in service of the human heart. Jes Bickham



"I definitely think about ageing too much, and I've thought about it since I was a kid," says Yu, neatly explaining his book.

STAR TREK 365

Fire photo torpedoes!

Authors: **Paula M Block, Terry J Erdmann**

Publisher: **Abrams** • **744 pages** • **£19.99**

ISBN: **978-0-81099-172-9** • **OUT NOW!**

★★★★★

SFX RECOMMENDS

Now that JJ Abrams has reanimated *Star Trek* in all its primary-coloured pomp, here's a timely tribute to the original and enduring '60s small screen classic.

Yes, you're allowed a cynical sigh. After four decades as a culture-conquering pop-phenomenon, you may well wonder what's left to say. But trust us – there's enough here to make even a Vulcan smile, or at the very least raise an intrigued, appreciative eyebrow.

First things first: it's more of a housebrick than a book, the very definition of a weighty tome. Buy two, set up a weight-training regime and you'll soon be ready to grapple the Gorn. It's a staggering, wrist-buckling 744 pages, evenly split between text and images. The *365* tag feels like a misnomer – there's no attempt at linking the entries to any kind of calendar, no dreamy, soft-focus Joan Collins to swoon over on Valentine's Day or scowly, blood-chilling Balok for Halloween. Instead, the book contents itself with charting the behind-the-scenes saga of Gene Roddenberry's immortal creation, pitched halfway between episode guide and oral history.

While the prose brings a fresh, informed perspective to the much-told tale, it's the pictures that truly sing. The book's authors were allowed to raid the CBS archive, and they've unearthed some true beauts, from matte paintings to phaser blueprints to Shatner giving it some serious Hef with two of Mudd's women. A bare-chested crewman holds a clapperboard in front of the Enterprise, cigarette in mouth. There are also shots of rare toys and ephemera, from early fanzines to comic book covers to a plastic "Sky Diving Parachutist" incarnation of Kirk. The Shat must have dug that.

With a foreword by revered original series story editor DC Fontana, this is a dose of pure dilithium to power your nostalgia circuits. Nick Setchfield

The interior and exterior of the Galileo 7 shuttle were built by toy licensee AMT, who'd won the rights to make plastic kits of the ship.

THE REAPERS ARE THE ANGELS

Temple of doom

Author: **Alden Bell**

Publisher: **Tor** • **306 pages** • **£16.99**

ISBN: **978-1-230-74864-4** • **OUT NOW!**

★★

Various recent occurrences may well indicate that the end is nigh (hurricanes, floods, volcanic ash, David Cameron's election as Prime Minister). Perhaps that's why we seem to be awash in stories of doom and gloom – from the big-screen adaptation of *The Road* to disaster blockbuster *2012* and numerous Discovery Channel documentaries.

Now you can add *The Reapers Are The Angels* to the list. It sees a young, philosophical and hard-fisted woman called Temple trawling the streets of post-apocalyptic America, and encountering everything from flesh-hungry zombies to a mute refugee and a mysterious Alaskan tracker. Add a little bit of sex, some southern-fried fear (Temple is attempting to make her way back to Texas) and some grisly body-horror, and you have yet another attempt at redoing *I Am Legend*.

However, this time around the use of Richard Matheson's third-person narration feels especially clumsy.

Indeed, the inclusion of large tracts of dialogue leaves the book feeling akin to a screenplay, and makes one wonder why author Alden Bell didn't use the far more apt first-person standpoint to document his heroine's perilous journey.

This isn't the only problem with the novel. Its biggest failing is that it doesn't add anything new to the tired mythology of the living dead. It ends with a "cathartic" Christian cop-out ("She wonders if God would be angry at her") and never quite engages, in spite of some promising late-in-the-day hillbilly horror.

Yes, America's South is a scary place, but it's going to take more than a few hicks and undead ghouls to score big in what must now, surely, be the twilight of the zombie/armageddon genre. Calum Waddell

Under his real name (Joshua Gaylord), Alden Bell co-edited a collection of letters on James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*.

SO COLD THE RIVER

Left us cold

Author: **Michael Koryta**

Publisher: **Hodder & Stoughton** • **503 pages** • **£17.99**

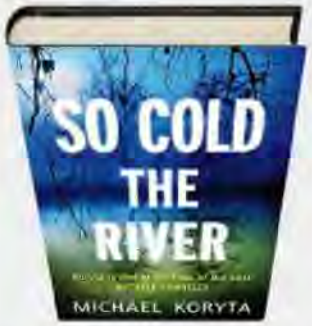
ISBN: **978-0-340-99822-9** • **OUT NOW!**

★★

This supernatural thriller is the first of mystery writer Michael Koryta's novels to be published in the UK, and it arrives with a barrage of praise from the American press and his fellow authors, drawing comparisons with the likes of Stephen King and Peter Straub. Exactly what they all saw in it we're not sure: it starts off well enough – hokey, yet intriguing – but towards the middle becomes dull, and by the end it's simply irritating.

Protagonist Eric Shaw is a failed filmmaker who now earns a living making memorial videos for funerals. When he's hired to get some footage from the hometown of dying millionaire Campbell Bradford, he's given a bottle of mineral water that was produced in the town, which the old guy kept with him throughout his life. When Eric succumbs to a strange temptation to drink the water (d'oh!), things start to go awry...

Yet not a lot happens. Eric spends ages just talking to people and drinking mineral water, which gives



him visions that cover most of the exposition. Some aspects of the mystery are too obvious, while others are held back too long. We see a lot of the main characters' inner lives, but they're boringly simplistic – and Eric's ex-wife Claire has no real characteristics at all beyond being a nice person. Koryta also has a minor stylistic tic of missing out pronouns at the beginning of sentences. Doesn't bother you at first. Gets kinda irritating after a while.

The book's pace does pick up in the last 100 pages, but it never builds any real sense of tension and the whole thing doesn't add up to much. For a novel like this to say so little is one thing; for it to *do* so little is a much more serious problem. Eddie Robson

This is Koryta's first fantasy work. A former private detective, most of his previous books are mysteries featuring gumshoe Lincoln Perry.

THE ART OF DREW STRUZAN

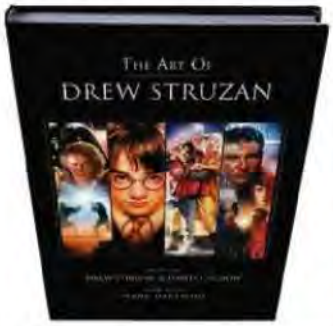
SFX RECOMMENDS

Poster boy

Authors: **Drew Struzan, David J Schow**
Publisher: **Titan Books** • **160 pages** • **£24.99**
ISBN: **978-1-84856-619-4** • **24 September**

★★★★★

Even if you don't recognise Drew Struzan's name, chances are you know his work. Many of the finest movie posters of the last four decades have boasted the characteristic "Drew" signature, and this fantastic book pulls many of his numerous career highlights together. From iconic *Indiana Jones* one-sheets to unused artwork for *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*, almost every page is something you'd like on your wall – if only that didn't mean cutting up a beautiful book.



What makes this a truly essential purchase, however, are the comments from Struzan himself, who provides a candid (if brief) account of his design process, the stories behind the posters and his feelings on Hollywood.

It's an intriguing look at the career of a man who could make *Masters Of The Universe* look like a must-see – whether you're an art lover or just a fan of movies, you'll want this on your book shelf. Richard Edwards

Despite having drawn Harrison Ford numerous times for posters, Struzan only met the actor for the first time earlier this year.

Moody artwork for the *Blade Runner* DVD reissue in 2007.

Struzan became "the Indy guy" in George Lucas's eyes.

Hellboy art that del Toro loved but the studio didn't want to use.

That's Drew's body in the poster, not Kurt Russell's!

THE FALL

New York gets a little long in the tooth

Authors: **Guillermo del Toro, Chuck Hogan**
Publisher: **HarperCollins** • **308 pages** • **£14.99**
ISBN: **978-0-00731-949-7** • **OUT NOW!**

★★★½

When is the vampire backlash really going to kick in? We're rapidly approaching saturation point for bloodsucker-related fiction, and the tide shows no signs of slowing with the arrival of *The Fall*. Yes, it's another commercially-aimed vamp tale, but the fact that it hails from the mind of acclaimed horror director Guillermo del Toro means it at least takes a rather more challenging direction.

Following up 2009's *The Strain*, this second volume of a trilogy sees New York falling directly under the control of a particularly vicious outbreak of vampirism. With the city collapsing into anarchy, the only people who may be able to halt the infection are disease specialist Ephraim Goodweather and ageing vampire hunter Abraham Setrakian. But while Ephraim's newly vampiric ex-wife is hunting down his son, corrupt forces in the government are allowing the infection to continue – and a vampire civil war is brewing that could pull the whole world into an apocalyptic hell.

Once again, del Toro and Hogan don't mess around, delivering a fast pace, plenty of action and a wonderfully gross and detailed take on vampire biology. There's no shortage of gore, and the doomy atmosphere that builds throughout the story is often surprisingly powerful, making this a step up from the awkward execution of *The Strain*. However, del Toro still can't stop the blend of virus-outbreak thriller and old-school vamps from sometimes feeling overwrought and cheesy, while the characterisation veers from the effective to the two-dimensional. As an undemanding read, though, it delivers plenty of rip-roaring horror entertainment – and also sets up one hell of a cliffhanger for the trilogy's upcoming final volume to resolve... Saxon Bullock

The name of one of the villains – Eldritch Palmer – is an in-joke referencing the Philip K Dick novel *The Three Stigmata Of Palmer Eldritch*.

THE BLACK PRISM

Colourless trilogy opener

Author: **Brent Weeks**
Publisher: **Orbit** • **629 pages** • **£12.99**
ISBN: **978-1-84149-905-5** • **OUT NOW!**

★★

Some books you simply reach breaking point with. In the case of Brent Weeks's latest, it came on page 22, when the main character, Kip, is filled with alarm at the thought of fellow teenager Isabel being caught up in the impending violent slaughter of his hometown. Not because they're sort-of friends, but because she's hot. Sorry, "turning into a beautiful woman".

Now, it might just be an attack of poor phrasing – there's more than enough of that to go around – rather than a sign that this story and its characters have all the depth and maturity of a paddling pool. Indeed, in a better-written novel, Kip could have been an endearing lead: he's a smart, well-meaning boy who buries the twin insecurities of obesity and an abusive upbringing beneath a wisecracking motormouth persona. But here he's lost amid glacially-paced infodumping, the most laboured dialogue this side of a *Babylon 5* episode, and plot twists so contrived that they require characters to act in ways

diametrically opposed to their, for want of a better word, personalities.

The Black Prism reads like the fever dream of a teenage boy who sees more shoot-'em-ups than sunlight. There are bucketloads of explicit violence, but it's all more garish than gut-wrenching, and our heroes' bruises have generally worn off by the next chapter; the tediously leery descriptions of female characters' physical attributes, meanwhile, are offset by an awkward coyness about consensual sex and a cloying sentimentality about childhood crushes.

Bonus star, mind, for a nifty magic system based on how the human eye perceives different wavelengths of light; it's not exactly hard SF, but it does provide some colour in an otherwise dull tale. Nic Clarke

It was Isaac Newton who first demonstrated that white light is made up of a spectrum of different colours. So this book is his fault, kind of.

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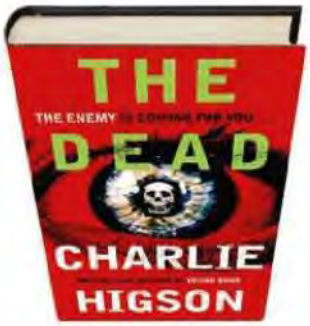
THE DEAD
365 Days Earlier

Author: **Charlie Higson**
Publisher: **Puffin** • **449 pages** • **£12.99**
ISBN: **978-0-141-38465-8** • **OUT NOW!**
★★★★

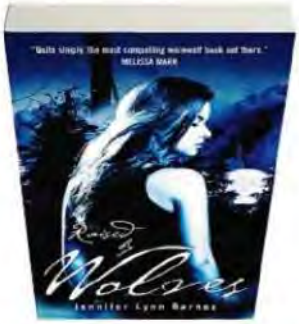
Vampires, your days are numbered! The zombie conquest of the zeitgeist continues with *Fast Show* star Charlie Higson's follow-up to *The Enemy*, his Young Adult horror which saw everyone over 14 become a flesh-craving Infected.

It shares all of the strengths of the first instalment. It's briskly paced, and Higson has a knack for quickly sketching distinctive characters, although many of the most memorable do fit into pigeonholes – mouthy girl from the 'hood, posh school rugger bugger, white van man and so on. Pop culture references, lashings of snot and pus and a decent command of tween slang ensure it'll delight the target audience, but grown-up zombie fans will find it equally palatable. Higson is as ruthless as George Romero: life expectancy is short, no character is safe, and it's definitely not for the squeamish.

What's disappointing, since this kicks off a year earlier and follows another bunch of characters across London, is the lack of any sense of development from book one; indeed, at times it feels like a remix. On the plus side, that does make it completely accessible for newbies.
Ian Berriman



Top fact we learnt: "Kuku-kuku kaki kakak kakekku kaku kaku" is Indonesian for "The toenails of my grandfather's elder brother are stiff."



RAISED BY WOLVES
Happy families, werewolf-style

Author: **Jennifer Lynn Barnes**
Publisher: **Quercus** • **422 pages** • **£6.99**
ISBN: **978-0-85738-029-6** • **OUT NOW!**
★★★

Werewolves are cool, but they're also scary as hell. That's the overall message of this Young Adult fantasy, which treats its lycanthropic stars with the respect and terror they deserve. We see their growly ways through the eyes of Bryn, who survived a werewolf attack as a child and has been raised as part of a pack. A new arrival in her town – a boy with lupine issues of his own – causes her to rethink her life and set off on a mission to reclaim it.

Most of *Raised By Wolves* is spent explaining the rigid wolf caste system to the reader: fascinating, yes, but it's no substitute for action. It also falls into the trap of laying out *every single fleeting thought* crossing the heroine's mind, often in heavy-handed single-sentence paragraphs, meaning that a simple chat with a pal can last for many pages. When you're not mentally yelling at the author, "Get on with it!", however, you should enjoy the rest; Jennifer Lynn Barnes has painted a complex and extraordinary wolf-world that would be nice to explore again. Just don't pick it up expecting a pulsing page-turner.
Jayne Nelson

Barnes planned out the way packs would work after observing free-ranging monkeys on an island, as part of her academic studies.

BULLET TIME! A book in bullet points

DC COMICS: THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY POSTER BOOK

Publisher: **Quirk Books** • ISBN: **978-1-59474-462-4** • **208 pages** • **£24.99** • **OUT NOW!**

- Features 100 DC covers, from 1935's *Fun* #1 to *Batman RIP*, perforated and ready to pull out and frame – though it'd be kind of a shame to do so!
- On the reverse of each A3 print is some well-informed commentary and a pair of related cover images.
- Landmarks such as the first appearances of Batman, the Flash and Wonder Woman appear.
- We love the more oddball choices: Jimmy Olsen as a bridge-wrecking giant turtle man! Plutonian snowmen with laser-beam eyes! A squad of Nazi gorillas!
- Image quality is variable. Sadly, a few of the old covers are visibly creased and stained.

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THE TECHNICIAN

The mystery of the gabbleducks revealed!

Author: **Neal Asher**

Publisher: **Tor** • **502 pages** • **£17.99**

ISBN: **978-0-230-70874-7** • **OUT NOW!**

★★★★★

SFX RECOMMENDS

Each of Neal Asher's books is an improvement on the last. With *The Technician*, the improvement is an injection of subtlety. Broken minds, a broken world, broken ideologies and a broken alien species are the components of a story whose themes are rebirth and healing. Although it features Asher's dry wit, wild ecological imagination, gore, huge robots and giant fights, it's a welcome departure from the violence-solves-all drive of his *Agent Cormac* books. There's complexity that goes beyond weird crustaceans or inventive ways to kill people.

Masada is recovering from the civil war that saw the overthrow of that world's theocracy (described in *The Line Of Polity*), and is now part of the Polity. Jeremiah Tombs is the sole survivor of an attack by the Technician, a huge biomechanoid that skins creatures alive and makes sculptures from their remains. The Technician has done something to Tombs's mind – something to do with the extinct Atheter civilisation and their animalistic descendants, the gabbleducks. War drone Amistad (from *Shadow Of The Scorpion*) is sent to Masada to unravel what it is. What he discovers may change the Polity for ever...

Masada's backstory trips up the narrative at the beginning as events from several *Polity* books are clumsily referenced, and it doesn't help that Asher chooses to open the novel by bouncing up and down his future timeline. It's a choppy start to an otherwise brilliant story, but it smooths out, and then... there really isn't room to do justice to Asher in a review of any length, so we'll just say this: buy it, then buy the rest of his books. The man's a national treasure. Guy Haley

If you see Asher in a pub, his is a pint of IPA. Unless it's in Crete (where he spends much of his time), in which case it's a carafe of white wine.

BEARERS OF THE BLACK STAFF

You just can't get the staff these days

Author: **Terry Brooks**

Publisher: **Orbit** • **350 pages** • **£18.99**

ISBN: **978-1-84149-583-5** • **OUT NOW!**

Also available in paperback (£12.99)

★★★

Like the Cliff Richard of the fantasy genre, the *Shannara* series has good old-fashioned staying power. Trends have come and gone, but since the first novel was released in 1977, the books have delivered their own style of uplifting fantasy, remaining as popular as ever today (despite not featuring a single vampire).

Now, author Terry Brooks is on a mission to show the birth of the *Shannara* world. In *Genesis Of Shannara*, he detailed the destruction of civilisation and left a rag-tag bunch of survivors in a remote mountain valley, sealed behind a magic curtain while the rest of the world was scorched sterile. This first half of the *Legends Of Shannara* duology picks up five centuries later, as the protective curtain fails and the valley's denizens are threatened by a huge army of land-hungry Trolls. The last Knight of the Word, Sider Ament, and two teenage Trackers must convince the valley's complacent races that the threat is real, but while most are in denial, others manipulate the crisis to their own evil ends...

It's a story that'll please Brooks's many fans, returning to the classic *Shannara* topics: teens coming of age, huge odds and sacrifice, magic and political skulduggery. The author also continues his themes of racial intolerance and environmental pollution (made all the more poignant by BP's cock-up in the Gulf of Mexico). However, the edginess and stinging pace that featured in *Genesis* have gone, along with the more interesting grey areas. *Bearers* still lopes along steadily, but the characters are polarised into simple good or evil, creating a shallow feeling and a craving for more than just high adventure. Sandy Auden

Terry Brooks is working on a new *Shannara* trilogy focusing on the lost Elfstones of Faerie. Tried looking down the back of the sofa?

FIRE & WATER

Comics pioneer gets his due

Author: **Blake Bell**

Publisher: **Fantagraphics** • **216 pages** • **$39.99**

ISBN: **978-1-60699-166-4** • **OUT NOW!**

★★★★

Though some might believe the comic book antihero first took form in the '60s and '70s with creations like the Hulk, the tradition goes back to at least October 1939, and the first appearance of writer-artist Bill Everett's Namor the Sub-Mariner. Half-man, half-fish, this angry outsider Hell-bent on destroying mankind later joined the Allies and helped defeat the Nazis.

Namor's conflict, argues comics historian Blake Bell in this biography, mirrors that of his creator, who saw fame and fortune escape him, even as the company he helped build grew into a pop culture colossus. Sadly, Everett's problems – including fiscal irresponsibility and alcoholism – grew, and his hard living ended his life at the age of 55.

But what a life! Bell unearths a keystone creator through a generous helping of gorgeously reproduced cover and interior art, along with original pencils and sketchbook work. Interviews with family and contemporaries, as well as Bell's own insightful analysis, cast further light on the range of Everett's work.

Best known as Namor's creator, Everett got his start with Centaur Publications, creating Amazing-Man, before departing for Funnies, Inc. He concocted the Sub-Mariner for Funnies' first client Martin Goodman, publisher of Marvel's predecessor Timely Comics. Namor, the Torch and Captain America became Timely's funnybook champions.

But he worked in other genres too. There's a gentle touch in Everett's greeting cards for his children, and his horror comics – on such titles as *Uncanny Tales* and *Weird Worlds* – couple the dynamism of his superhero work with the macabre sensibilities of EC titles such as *Tales From The Crypt*. Like Namor, Bill Everett was of more then one world. Fortunately for comic fans, *Fire & Water* explores all of them. Joseph McCabe

Bill Everett was a descendent of the Romantic poet William Blake. His full name was William Blake Everett.

BAUCHELAIN AND KORBAL BROACH

Erikson takes time out from conjuring grand narratives

Author: **Steven Erikson**

Publisher: **Bantam Press** • **316 pages** • **£16.99**

ISBN: **978-0-593-06394-1** • **OUT NOW!**

★★★

He's not known for brevity, but for several years Steven Erikson has been publishing novellas with Peter Crowther's excellent PS Publishing imprint. Judging by the trio of stories featured in this collection (full title: *The First Collected Tales Of Bauchelain And Korbal Broach*), it gives Erikson an opportunity to be more playful and experimental than in his longer Malazan Empire novels.

Each tale is set in the Malazan universe and focuses on the titular mysterious necromancers, described on the jacket as "eccentric" – an understatement, considering how their machinations cause mayhem for everyone around them.

Most often in the firing line is their servant, Emancipor Reese of Lamentable Moll, whose notoriously bad luck takes a dark turn when, in *Blood Follows*, he meets his new bosses. A disastrous sea voyage follows, described in *The Lees Of Laughter's End*, and we're invited to witness the trio's visit to the city of Quaint in *The Healthy Dead*.

Throughout, Erikson never misses a chance for a gag, to the extent that *The Healthy Dead* is essentially a satirical attack on those who get hung up on cleanliness of body and mind – the "desire for goodness", thinks Reese, leads to "intolerance" and "the end of civilisation".

For all the humour, though, you'll need a strong stomach to get the most out of these stories, so shot through are they with disturbing imagery. And Erikson makes few concessions to the short form; his writing is often detailed and dense. When this works, it gives the stories an impressive depth and resonance. At other times, though, Erikson's love for blood-splattered Grand Guignol threatens to overwhelm his narratives. Jonathan Wright

The first three *Bauchelian* novellas sold out in their original editions, but a fourth, *Crack'd Pot Trail*, is still available – tinyurl.com/crackdpot.

More at ebook-free-download.net or magazinesdownload.com

NIGHT OF THE LIVING TREKKIES

Warped genius

Authors: **Kevin Anderson, Sam Stall**

Publisher: **Quirk Books** • **£9.99**

ISBN: **978-1-59474-463-1** • **OUT NOW!**

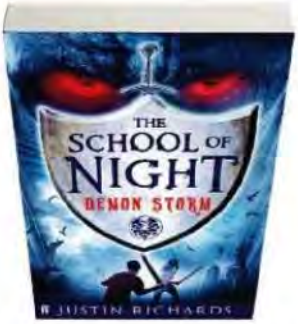
★★★★

Quirk Books have made a pile lately with fleetingly-amusing splices like *Pride And Prejudice And Zombies*, but mixing *Star Trek* and zombies works much better. Extremely enjoyable if you're a fan of both, this is top-grade pulp nonsense.

It centres on former soldier Jim Pike, assistant manager of a Houston hotel hosting a *Star Trek* convention, as guests and staff start turning into flesh-craving undead. It works because the authors know their onions – they're aware that "Janeway hair" becomes a worse insult if you specify "*season one* Janeway hair". They also make smart observations about the differing ethoses of *Trek* and zombie movies – and how both differ from workaday reality.

Well-structured, with some cunning twists and a neat SF spin on zombies (these ones are the result of alien parasites, and cause people to sprout gruesome third eyes), it'd make a superb film. Sadly, we suspect rights issues mean we'll never see a Hummer ploughing through a crowd of zombie Borg trombonists (long story...) on the big screen. Shame. Ian Berriman

In case you're wondering, yes, there *is* a "Khaaaaaaaaaan!" – just before a zombie dressed as Ricardo Montalban gets tasered!



THE SCHOOL OF NIGHT: DEMON STORM

A tasty school snack, heavy on the monster munch

Author: **Justin Richards**

Publisher: **Faber And Faber** • **224 pages** • **£6.99**

ISBN: **978-0-57124-508-6** • **OUT NOW!**

★★★½

Any kidult fiction featuring a young orphan co-opted into a school for the supernaturally gifted (in this case an academy for juvenile demon-hunters) is bound to invite comparisons to You Know Who. But whereas the darker aspects of JK Rowling's tales are leavened by a wide-eyed love of magic and a certain Bunter-ish, jolly-Quidditch-sticks humour, Justin Richards's new teen horror series is a more sombre affair, anchored by a shocking tragedy from which its adolescent hero never fully recovers.

Philip Pullman fans might also find the idea of feral demons bound to their human masters somewhat – forgive the pun – familiar. Throw in elements of *The Sixth Sense* and *Buffy* and the result can feel a bit like an iPod shuffle of recent supernatural hits. But Justin Richards has marshalled these elements and more into a cracking, page-turning yarn that mixes quickening terror with a haunting meditation on childhood loss that's likely to linger in the memories of young readers just as long as the scares. Paul Kirkley

Justin Richards is also the author of new original *Doctor Who* graphic novel *The Only Good Dalek* – our review's over on page 128.

BULLET TIME! A book in bullet points

THE END OF TEN

Author: **Stephen James Walker** • Publisher: **Telos Books** • **216 pages** • **£14.99** • ISBN: **978-1-84583-035-9**

• **Also available in hardback (£30)** • **OUT NOW!**

- Subtitled *The Unofficial And Unauthorised Guide to Doctor Who 2009*, this is the latest in Telos' impressively anal records of the new series.
- It feels a wee bit belated. The Tenth Doctor specials seem like ancient history now!
- The opening 38 pages documents 18 months of events, awards and tabloid rumour.
- The interesting bit is 62 pages of in-depth episode guides.
- There are also cast and crew biographies, and appendices on spin-off CDs, books and so on.
- Some of this – like a list of 2009's original *Who* novels that just quotes the back-cover blurbs – seems a teeny bit pointless. We could just google that, couldn't we?

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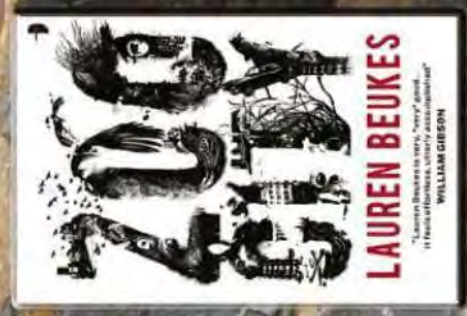
SOUL STEALERS

"For anyone who is missing their David Gemmell fix, plus a great series name: the Clockwork Vampire Chronicles." – 109

DAMAGE TIME

"For SF readers who love The Wire, a gritty cop drama set in a future New York on the verge of collapse." – CC FINLAY



ZOO CITY

"An energetic and imaginative fusion of sci-fi, fantasy and noir thriller. An absolute must. 5★★★★★" – SFX

ANGRY ROBOT

Brain twisting fiction.

CITIES IN FLIGHT #54

James Blish, 1970

Ken MacLeod gets a spindizzy feeling

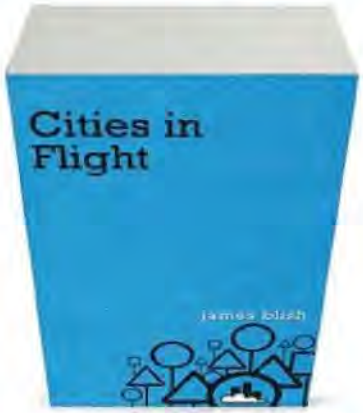
Civilisation will become increasingly global, oppressive and bureaucratic – but free space settlers will escape, to found brave new worlds beyond Earth's grasp. This is one of the great myths of SF. James Blish wrote it.

Cities In Flight is a fix-up tetralogy, cobbled together from stories and novels written between 1950 and 1962. SF critic John Clute has said that every SF work has a "real decade" in which it happens, no matter when it was written or when it is set. *Cities In Flight*'s real decade is the '50s, haunted by memories of the '30s. Its 40th century still has slide-rules, steel mills and slumps. Despite all anachronisms, the eye-kicks have it. Cities! In flight!

The first novel, *They Shall Have Stars*, begins in 2018. The Cold War is still going strong. Big science is failing, choked by secrecy. Two areas of research – gravity and life-extension – succeed. Blish pulls a blinder here, fast-talking, name-dropping real physicists and hand-waving algebra. Anti-gravity, the faster-than-light drive, and anti-ageing drugs make a long life amid the stars possible for the lucky thousands who escape.

In *A Life For The Stars*, set a thousand years later, the epic takes off. The anti-gravity devices – spindizzies – are capable of lifting entire cities. One by one, they leave. Teenager Chris deFord is press-ganged aboard the rusting steel-town of Scranton, PA. He's soon traded to New York, where he meets the hero of the series, Mayor John Amalfi, and its next most memorable character: NYC's onboard AI, the City Fathers, who talk in capitals, like Death or God. Through adventures, Chris grows up.

Earthman, Come Home details NYC's subsequent scrapes and skirmishes. In one such, Amalfi meets the love of his very long life, Dee. Intelligent, independent, sexy in a "sort of sack" and "black tube"



It has repeated situations, rather like *Star Trek*, which Blish wrote for

(after centuries of seeing women in overalls, Amalfi's eyes pop at a top and skirt) she charms him and marries his best friend. Amalfi knuckles down to his slide-rule and a bit on the side. Facing a galaxy-wide slump, NYC leads a rabble of starving cities in a "March on Earth", stomping old enemies along the way, and flees to Andromeda. Peace at last!

It doesn't last. In *The Triumph Of Time*, NYC's citizens learn that the universe is about to collide with its anti-matter twin. Dee and Amalfi get together – not before time, one might say. NYC travels to the exact centre of the metagalaxy, the still axis of creation. Time ends. Four individuals survive long enough to explode into new universes. Amalfi, alone, chooses to go out with a bigger bang. Creation begins.

It's all bonkers, and wonderful.

The epic has flaws: repeated situations – rather like *Star Trek*, for the first series of which Blish later wrote scripts and novelisations – and inconsistencies. The Galactic polity and economy, and – when you stop to think about it – the central analogy of flying cities with migrant workers make no sense. The chronology has several jarring gear shifts, where more millennia of space flight are implied than the dates allow. Given all that, it's interesting to see what holds it together, and what makes it so enjoyable. The theory of cyclical history, derived from the works of Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee – helpfully explained and charted in an appendix – gives it a structural frame. Numerous sly cultural references, and evocative allusions to great events off-stage – the war with the alien empire of Vega, the evolution of isolated human colonies, the sedimentation of the Bureaucratic State out of the impasse of the Cold War – give it colour and depth. The ever-increasing scales of space and time, the engaging long-lived characters who inhabit them, and the escalating risks Blish takes for the sake of a vivid image do the rest.

Built on a solid foundation of physics, philosophy, poetry and history, Blish's architecture still stands – and flies. SFX

Ken MacLeod's latest book, The Restoration Game, *is available in hardback now (published by Orbit, priced £18.99).*

Like This? Try These!

***A Fire Upon The Deep* by Vernor Vinge (1992)**
Winner of the 1993 Hugo Award and nominated for a Nebula Award. Galactic scale, speculative physics, high adventure, huge fun.

The Night's Dawn trilogy by Peter F Hamilton (1996–1999)
Contemporary cultures replicated across the galaxy, with wacky physics, wackier metaphysics, and much colour and adventure.

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» A great collection of four stories – *Triumph Of Time* being the best in the bunch. A collision of two universes made it such an epic tale.
KevTheLostDoctor

» I'm struggling to find something good to say about the books. The dialogue is hokey and clichéd – a cross between '50s gangster films and *Plan 9 From Outer Space* – the plots are nonsensical and the characters almost uniformly unlikeable.
Jimcalagon

» Although I would agree that the concepts are obviously out of date, that doesn't stop it from being a generally enjoyable read. The problem with it for me was the fact that it reads a lot like a collection of shorter stories mashed together to make a larger release.
spoonofmilk

» It often evokes considerable sense of wonder, but goes a bit mad right at the end. My favourite part is in the first book, detailing experiments in and around Jupiter.
Chun the Unavoidable

» I read this some years back. However I found it one of the tougher books in the SF Masterworks series, not just because of the length but also the story itself. Though some bits were interesting the whole thing seemed to ramble along aimlessly.
Deep Black

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» In *SFX* 203, Liz Williams will look at Joan D Vinge's 1981 Hugo winner *The Snow Queen*.

NEXT ISSUE: Stephen Baxter on Philip K Dick's 1962 alternate history classic *The Man In The High Castle*.

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New Daleks, old tricks.

GRAPHIC NOVEL

DOCTOR WHO
THE ONLY GOOD DALEK

Action station

Writer: **Justin Richards**
Artist: **Mike Collins**
Publisher: **BBC Books** • **128 pages** • **£12.99**
ISBN: **978-1-84607-984-9** • **OUT NOW!**
★★★☆

Given that the history of *Doctor Who* comics stretches back 46 years, it's rather staggering to realise that this is only the second stab at an original graphic novel (the *first*, fact fans, was 1994's *The Age Of Chaos*, published by Marvel UK and co-written by one Colin Baker). The storyline sees the Eleventh Doctor and Amy arriving at a space station, where, in the hope of gaining an edge in a century-old human/Dalek war, researchers are striving to unlock the secrets of Dalek technology...

It's something of a strange hybrid. The TARDIS lands in a recreation of a petrified forest from the Daleks' home planet (shades of "The Time Of Angels"), there are appearances by Skaro's deadly Varga plants, the Daleks' Robomen slaves and their monstrous pet the Slyther, and the Earth forces are decked out in Space Security Agent uniforms – all references to the William Hartnell era. But the tone is very much of the '80s. This is *Doctor Who* as script

There's little room for humour

editor Eric Saward envisioned it: action-orientated fare crammed with shoot-outs and explosions, and boasting a high body count. There's little room for humour, emotion (other than anger) or, for that matter, female supporting characters.

As in 1966's "The Power Of The Daleks" and last year's "Victory Of The Daleks", the tale features pepperpots who appear to have been tamed, but can't really be trusted. But the most intriguing plot element is the creation of a non-aggressive "good Dalek" through genetic engineering, a concept with echoes of not only Eccleston encounter "Dalek" and Troughton tale "The Evil Of The Daleks", but the Fourth Doctor's mission in "Genesis Of The Daleks". Sadly, this winning idea feels under-used, with the Doctor never forced into difficult ethical territory.

As for the art by Mike Collins (a regular on *Doctor Who Magazine*'s strip), it's a little hit-and-miss. Likenesses tend to be strong in close-up (perhaps when they correspond to publicity images?) and a little iffy elsewhere, and the overall quality is puzzlingly inconsistent, with some panels looking slick and others more like rough sketches. All in all, this debut effort from BBC Books doesn't quite live up to its landmark status. Calvin Baxter

DNA SCAN

- Action! – 45%
- Hartnell references – 30%
- Dalek deviousness – 20%
- Ogrons – 5%
- Laughs – 0%

The station Commander is named Tranter, possibly in homage to Jane Tranter, responsible for bringing back *Who* in 2005.

CLASSIC GRAPHIC NOVEL

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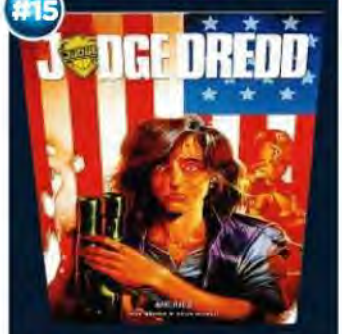

JUDGE DREDD: AMERICA

Judge Dredd has for the last 30 years been pretty much the biggest British comics character around – albeit one who's a complete "fascist bastard", according to creator Alan Grant.

In *America* (first published from 1990-1991) John Wagner spins a tale where Dredd and the Judges are the villains, representing the repressive regime crushing freedom in the Big Meg.

The story's told in flashback by Bennett Beeny, a famous entertainer deeply in love with America, a beautiful, passionate daughter of immigrants, named in honour of the liberties and opportunities of the New World. But this is no longer the Land of the Free: it's Mega City One and democracy is a crime.

As a student, America asks her history teacher about the old American motto of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. "At least we're still alive, America, one out of three's not bad." But that's not enough for America. Her yearning for freedom and democracy turns to activism, then to violent revolt against the system. It brings us to an inevitable conclusion: violent death before an ancient symbol of the liberty she loves...

Wagner eschews easy black and white morality to mix it up; the Judges are indeed violent dictators, but they're also all that keeps Mega City together, while America and her comrades are willing to commit bloody murder to achieve their aims. Add glorious, painted artwork (some of Colin MacNeil's finest), doomed, heartfelt romance and moral quagmire and you have a powerful, incendiary work – a true British classic. Joe Gordon

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More at ebook-free-download.net or magazinesdownload.com

OVERVIEW

THOR, THE MIGHTY AVENGER

Stan and Jack'd be proud

Writer: **Roger Langridge**
Artist: **Chris Samnee**
Publisher: **Marvel** • **24 pages** • **$2.99** • **OUT NOW!**
★★★★

From *Astonishing Thor* to *Ultimate Comics Thor*, Marvel are in danger of flooding the market with the ever-increasing adventures of the Thunder God even before Kenneth Branagh's big screen extravaganza hits cinemas next summer. But one book that shouldn't be allowed to fall by the wayside is all-ages title *Thor, The Mighty Avenger*.

The first two-issue storyline begins with the Norse legend landing in Oklahoma, after he's banished from Asgard following a domestic dispute with Odin. He teams up with museum assistant Jane Foster to steal an ancient relic that turns out to be his mystical hammer Mjolnir. After a riotous bar brawl, the pair pit their wits against the nefarious Mr Hyde.

Issue three is even better, as still-married Avengers Hank and Janet Pym come to town and much fun is had with their Wasp and Ant Man/Giant Man personas. Known for writing and drawing the slapstick comedy of *Art d'Ecco*, Langridge not only brings an affectionate and infectious sense of humour but also a sense of pathos that harks back to Marvel's original heroic age.

Artist Chris Samnee also excels. His fluid cartooning and dynamic layouts resemble a combination of Kevin Nowlan, David Mazzachelli and Langridge himself, and he's superbly supported by Matthew Wilson's colours. A delight for young and old readers alike, that deserves to find an audience. Stephen Jewell

Langridge admits that, as a kid, he never really got into the Lee/Kirby Thor, "I think because it all seemed to take itself so seriously."

OVERVIEW

THE SIXTH GUN

How The West Was Weird

Writer: **Cullen Bunn**
Artist: **Brian Hurtt**
Publisher: **Oni Press** • **$3.99** • **OUT NOW!**
★★★★

It's the genre that won't die. Even when it hasn't managed a significant crossover success for years, the Western never seems to go out of style – and now we've got a new approach in *The Sixth Gun*, an attention-grabbing blend of weird horror and classic gunplay from the creators of 2007 indie comic thriller *The Damned*.

The opening six-issue arc of this ongoing series revolves around the last and greatest of a collection of six handguns, all of which possess frightening and bizarre powers. The gun in question falls into the hands of innocent young woman Becky Montcrief, and a varied cast of investigators, gunfighters and undead ghouls are soon battling for control of the mythical six-shooter.

The key to getting Westerns right is atmosphere, and *The Sixth Gun* has it in abundance, showcasing a colourful mix of violence, magic and myth. The story plays as if spaghetti western legend Sergio Leone was directing a dark fantasy epic, and the first three issues pack in a ferocious amount of action.

While the execution has a few awkward moments, for the most part this is a splendidly entertaining romp with detailed world-building and some brilliantly weird concepts. Brian Hurtt's quirky, energetic art is surprisingly cartoony but fits the gothic vibe extremely well, while Cullen Bunn's script conjures up the lurid, pulpy style of old-school EC horror comics. Featuring intriguing plot threads, compelling characters and imaginative action, *The Sixth Gun* is shaping up to be a satisfying and enjoyably crazy genre mash-up. Saxon Bullock

The Sixth Gun wasn't always going to be a Western – Cullen Bunn's original idea was that it would take place in modern-day New York.

GRAPHIC NOVEL

GIRL COMICS

Maximum women, minimal cleavage

Writers/artists: **Various**
Publisher: **Marvel** • **136 pages** • **$19.99**
ISBN: **978-0-78514-792-3** • **OUT NOW!**
★★★

Let's face it – out of all the titles Marvel could have chosen for an anthology designed to showcase female comic-book creators, *Girl Comics* is not exactly ideal (we await *Manly Comics* with less-than-baited breath...). Away from the dodgy branding, though, this selection of short stories does a pretty fine job of exploring various corners of the Marvel universe from some interesting and varied perspectives.

Packed with a collection of gently-paced strips, from fun romps to character pieces – all of which are written, drawn, lettered and edited by women (including writers and artists like Kathryn Immonen, Colleen Coover, Ann Nocenti, Devin Grayson and many more) – it's a mixed but entertaining bag, with a whole assortment of visual styles. Best of the bunch is Carla Speed McNeil's take on Wolverine getting Kitty Pride her first beer, while there are appearances from Dr Strange, Nightcrawler, Jubilee, the Punisher and a whole collection of other Marvel mainstays.

The lighter, more humorous tales tend to work better, but a few too many stories don't make much impression. In fact, some of the most satisfying material is in the accompanying text articles, which focus on behind-the-scenes female writers and artists from Marvel's past, paying touching tribute to people whose contributions have often gone uncelebrated. They're an effective cap to what's often a fun and diverting anthology – but unlike the more focussed *Strange Tales* series, this doesn't quite make it into being truly essential. Saxon Bullock

Marvel's next "alternative" anthology is lined up – the first issue of the second volume of *Strange Tales* will hit comic shops on 6 October.

BOOK

FOUR COLOR FEAR

Fresh chills from the vault

Editor: **Greg Sadowski**
Artists: **Jack Cole, Reed Crandall, Basil Wolverton, Al Williamson and more**
Publisher: **Fantagraphics Books** • **320 pages** • **$29.99**
ISBN: **978-1-60699-343-9** • **OUT NOW!**
★★★★

Although famed horror comics publisher EC was at the centre of the censorship storm that almost destroyed American comics in the '50s, legendary EC titles like *Tales From The Crypt* actually represented only 3% of horror comics available at the time. As historian John Benson points out in his introduction to this illuminating collection of pre-Comics Code tales, major publishers like Atlas, Harvey and Charlton were equally busy cranking out titles like *Adventures Into Terror*, *Chamber Of Chills* and the brilliantly named *This Magazine Is Haunted*.

Gathered from such lesser known but equally prolific horror titles, *Four Color Fear* offers some left-field alternatives to EC's often formulaic morality tales. Stories range from a global revolution by the fascist living dead to a macabre domestic farce in which a flesh-eating zombie ingratiates himself into the home of his ex-girlfriend. There are several nightmarish flights into psychedelia and a particularly bizarre episode involving a woman stalked by an amorous axe-wielding cactus.

The artwork by industry giants like Al Williamson, Joe Kubert and Wallace Wood make these obscure stories appealing enough. However, what really makes this collection stand out are the exhaustive footnotes, crammed with anecdotes, creator quotes and historical information. *Four Color Fear* offers an important perspective on a crucial decade in the history of American comics. Alec Worley

A comics exhibition took place in Parliament in 1954, prompting Winston Churchill to exclaim, "I should like to read some horror comics."

"Fancy a quickie?"

HALO: REACH

Bungie say *Halo*, goodbye

Publisher: **Microsoft** • **£49.99** • **OUT NOW!**

Format: **Xbox 360**

★★★★★

SFX RECOMMENDS

Back in 2001, Bungie Studios released *Halo: Combat Evolved* and revolutionised the first-person shooter landscape. Nine fantastic years later we reach the present, and Bungie is retiring from its most famous franchise with their fifth entry, prequel *Halo: Reach*.

The Reach in question is a planet, one of the last surviving human colonies and – if you know your *Halo* history – location of the brutal and bloody slaughter of millions of humans and the majority of the Spartan super-soldiers. Hardly happy stuff, and rather fittingly Bungie's exit from the *Halo* brand is the darkest story of all. The art bods have muted the once-glaring green and purple overtones of the *Halo* worlds and have shoved aside fantastical elements for grittier visuals.

Combat-wise, Bungie has comfortably outdone anything in its history. There's a tremendous difference between previous battlefield sizes and *Reach*'s offerings: it's as though the Bungie team has stepped into the old games, tethered the level boundaries to the back of Warthogs and driven off into the sunsets to stretch its playable zones to breaking points. The extra space has then been padded with more enemies than ever before, meaning each fire-fight is a small-scale war.

Impressive though it may be, some of that hard work is undone by clueless storytelling. If you haven't swotted up with the comics, the books and the *Halo* Wiki backstory you'll be utterly mystified by the whole affair. Directionless plot combined with a distinct lack of stand-out set-pieces (where's Reach's equivalent of *Halo 3*'s Scarab fights?) could leave you under the impression that Bungie's involvement with *Halo* ends not with a bang but with a whimper. If you judge the game on its campaign alone, *Halo: Reach* is the fourth best *Halo* game.

Yet *Halo* is more than just the story of one six-man team's struggle against overwhelming odds: it's a collection of multiplayer modes programmed to last years, and this particular collection is staggeringly brilliant. Somewhere between the design-it-yourself Forge World, the club-together-against-the-computer Firefight and the all-against-all standard multiplayer variations, the campaign failings become irrelevant.

Reach's multiplayer outclasses anything in *Halo*'s history. There's more game-per-pound here than in any other title this year, and the breadth of options makes *Reach*, as a package, the send-off Bungie has been planning since the first *Halo* way back in 2001. *Halo* will eventually move onwards. But upwards? Doubtful. Michael Gapper

DNA SCAN

The events of *Reach* are partially chronicled in Eric Nylund's recently re-released spin-off novel, *Halo: The Fall Of Reach*.

Killing people: enormous fun.

DEAD RISING 2

Vegas slaycation

Publisher: **Capcom** • **£49.99** • **OUT NOW!**

Format reviewed: **Xbox 360**

Also available on PS3

★★★★

Seventy-two thousand zombies to slay and almost as many unique ways to re-kill the fiends... *Dead Rising 2* is the *Dawn Of The Dead* remake where the survivors fight back, not just with shotguns and pitchforks, but with foam fingers, Bruce Forsyth's favourite cuddly toys, *Braindead*'s portable lawnmower, and twin chainsaws welded onto the front of a Kawasaki motorbike.

Anybody familiar with 2006's first entry in the series will be delighted to hear the sequel adds next to nothing, beyond co-op play. There's a new hero who can team up with a friend in a new casino-packed shopping mall that's themed suspiciously like Las Vegas. But whether fighting alone or in a pair you'll be battling the same masses of zombies and similar crazy psychopath bosses, using the same clunky fighting mechanics.

And that's great because, providing you got to grips with its clumsy controls, *Dead Rising* always was the ultimate zombie-killing toybox. Here you can still smash and crash your way into any shop and pick up random items to fend off the menacing hordes of the undead. You can also now combine these items. On its own an American football isn't particularly useful, beyond knocking a few zombies off their feet. When strapped to a grenade, however, it becomes a devastating missile capable of blowing scores of zombies to gloopy puddles!

That's what *Dead Rising 2* is all about. There's a storyline to follow about finding medicine to stave off your daughter's zombification, but the real meat comes from seeing what happens if you slam three drills through the top of a bucket and sit it on somebody's head. It's a masterclass in silliness, and there are 72,000 willing subjects eager for you to do your worst. A certain George Romero would love it. Matthew Pellett

Xbox 360 owners can buy a three-hour prequel chapter called *Dead Rising 2: Case Zero*, for little over three pounds.

Don't fancy yours much.

ENSLAVED

ODYSSEY TO THE WEST

Monkeying around

Publisher: **Namco Bandai** • **£49.99** • **OUT NOW!**

Format reviewed: **Xbox 360**

Also available on PS3

★★★★½

Long after the bombs scorched the Earth, says writer Alex Garland, nature stepped back into the picture and painted the grey landscapes green, yellow and purple again. His colourful "post-post-apocalyptic" environment is the backdrop to a futuristic envisioning of Chinese classic *Journey To The West*.

Enslaved also "stars" Andy Serkis, but the big-name talent doesn't outshine other qualities, it's just extra gloss on the juicy cake of dizzying acrobatic tomfoolery. Your time is spent scaling skyscrapers and battling mechanised sentry bots – a winning combo when delivered with this much panache. Matthew Pellett

That's a big long purple thing.

METROID: OTHER M

Publisher: **Nintendo** • **£39.99** • **OUT NOW!**

Format: **Wii**

★★★★

After three outings inside Samus Aran's suit, Nintendo lets us bask in their heroine's third-person glory, and she's a brutal, physical presence, all evasive dodges and eyebrow-raising takedowns. It's hard to believe this is the same squat sprite that trotted around back in 1986.

Look past the 21st century crash, bang, wallop, and the *Metroid* DNA remains. Samus still rolls through tiny cracks eking out upgrades, and her gradual acquisition of abilities forces you to constantly re-evaluate the surroundings. Only the addition of extensive cutscenes jars as Samus's voice actress mumbles away. Overlook the am-dram for the wham-bam, however, and *Other M* delights. Matthew Castle

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THE RELICS OF TIME

Publisher: **BBC Audio** · **60 mins** · **£9.99** · **OUT NOW!**

★★½

THE WHISPERING FOREST

Publisher: **Big Finish** · **110 mins** · **£14.99 (CD)/£12.99 (download)** · **OUT NOW!**

★★★★

NEVERMORE

Publisher: **Big Finish** · **60 mins** · **£10.99 (CD)/£8.99 (download)** · **OUT NOW!**

★★★★

ECHOES OF GREY

Publisher: **Big Finish** · **80 mins** · **£8.99 (CD)/£7.99 (download)** · **OUT NOW!**

★★★½

The Mad Old Uncle of the *Doctor Who* universe is back – and after last year's BBC series *Hornet's Nest*, we're getting another five-part dose of full-on eccentricity starring Tom Baker as the Fourth Doctor. *Demon Quest* once again feels like it's been deliberately tailored to suit its one-of-a-kind leading man, as we follow the Doctor and his middle-aged housekeeper Mrs Wibbsey (Susan Jameson) on a quest through time to track down a missing component of the TARDIS.

Their first stop is ancient Britain, where they get caught up in the dealings of a mysterious wizard, but while Paul Magrs's story certainly gives Baker every opportunity to be entertainingly peculiar, it's too aimless, rambling and whimsical for its own good. Even Baker's most shamelessly eccentric moments on the show weren't quite as self-indulgent as this, and while there are some fun highlights, it's more like listening to a cover version of the Fourth Doctor than the genuine article.

Over at Big Finish, the latest trilogy continues with *The Whispering Forest*, as the Fifth Doctor, Tegan, Nyssa and Turlough arrive on a jungle planet where a settlement of humans are trapped in superstitious beliefs, while being preyed on by enigmatic figures called "Takers". Again, the tricky prospect of an overcrowded TARDIS actually plays rather well, as the script gives all the leads a fair share of the action, and there are excellent performances across the board, especially from the ever-reliable Peter Davison. An emotive piece of old-school *Who* storytelling, *The Whispering Forest*'s various twists may not be blisteringly original but they do fit the early-'80s *Who* vibe extremely well, and it all leads to a doozy of a cliffhanger.

Elsewhere, the new run of Paul McGann adventures continues with *Nevermore*, as the Eighth Doctor and his new companion arrive in a bizarre prison seemingly dedicated to recreating the works of Edgar Allen Poe. They soon discover that this is all linked to an alien war criminal and an unusual black cat. There are effective twists and enjoyably arch literary in-jokes in this fast-paced and entertaining tale. Once again, this new run of Eighth Doctor stories is shaping up very nicely.

Finally, the *Companion Chronicles* reaches back into the '60s once again, with another appearance from Second Doctor assistant Zoe Herriot (Wendy Padbury). *Echoes Of Grey* once again plays with the fact that Zoe's memories of the Doctor were wiped by the Time Lords, as a mysterious girl takes her on a trip into her stolen memories, to discover the secret of a sinister medical research establishment she visited with the Doctor and Jamie. Padbury gives an excellent reading, and while the story is a little too dark for the Troughton era, it's still a gripping tale with a very powerful conclusion. Saxon Bullock

Out on 7 October: part two of *Demon Quest*, new Eleventh Doctor reading *The Jade Pyramid*, and *The Runaway Train*.

ROLEPLAYING GAME

DEATHWATCH

Makes Andy McNab look pah

Authors: **Ross Watson et al**

Publisher: **Fantasy Flight Games** · **396 pages** · **£40**

ISBN: **978-1-58994-778-8** · **OUT NOW!**

★★½

It's the grim darkness of the 41st millennium and you're the era's ultimate badass, a bio-engineered super-soldier with a chainsword in one hand and a bolter in the other: a Space Marine. *Deathwatch* is the third instalment in the Warhammer 40K roleplaying line. Where *Dark Heresy* focuses on investigation and *Rogue Trader* on exploration, this is about dangerous military operations.

The Deathwatch is sort of a Space Marine SAS, recruiting members from different Chapters like the Space Wolves and the Blood Angels into a "kill team" for dangerous missions. Members are further differentiated by their specialty, from heavy-weapon-toting Devastators to psi-powered Librarians.

The old-school rules are based on the second edition of Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay, a roll-under percentile system that's also used for *Dark Heresy* and *Rogue Trader*. *Deathwatch* has bigger shopping lists for weaponry and awesome powers, as well as rules for individuals fighting hordes. Swapping characters between the three games is possible but will cause problems: *Deathwatch* characters are much more powerful, especially in the melees and firefights of any mission.

It's this narrow focus that's the game's weakness. This week you'll be saving someone from Tyranid hordes; next week it'll be Orks, or storming a Chaos Marine stronghold... While there are nods towards roleplaying from "demeanour" rules that let you be a Hot-Blooded or Pious or Gregarious killing machine, scenarios can feel like one-model-per-player 40K wargame skirmishes. For single-session slaughterfests or campaigns that deliberately alternate RPG and wargame sessions, that's fine; as a week-in, week-out roleplaying game, *Deathwatch*'s appeal could soon pall. Dan Joyce

One of a Space Marine's bio-mods – the Betcher's Gland – allows him to spit acid at enemies and chew through iron bars. Handy.

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3 DOCTOR WHO COASTERS

Half Moon Bay • Width: 10cm • £5.95 for set of four

Available from: www.pulpshop.co.uk

These brightly-coloured coasters feature old-school *Who* images: Tom Baker in "talk to the hand, girlfriend" pose, a Voc from "The Robots Of Death", three Daleks and the TARDIS flying past a psychedelic purple blob. That's the only one we're not loving – it's like having an acid flashback every time you reach for a cuppa.

4 DOCTOR WHO FIGURES

Character Options • Height: 13.5cm-16cm • £24.99 (double sets)/£14.99

Collecting these is becoming an expensive habit, thanks to a flood of Comic-Con exclusives. Here's a "The Claws Of Axos" Axon monster/Master set, a "Planet Of Fire" Fifth Doctor/Master set, and a newly-regenerated Fifth Doctor. Best: the Anthony Ainley Master – it's the glaring eyes! Worst: the gutlord Axon, which seems to be wearing John McCririck-sized pants.

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DESIRE

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There's something *wrong* about this, and it's not just that it feels sticky, or smells oddly like hair wax. The little fat-creatures from "Partners In Crime" are just too cute for a stress toy. It feels positively wicked to be crushing its blobby little body in your palm – like standing on a kitten, or squeezing a foetus.

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This sweet piece of retro Tupperware features artwork we suspect dates back to the '60s, with the legend "Spaceboy" in a Trekkie-pleasing font. It may be meant for kids, but it's also perfect for grown-up geeks' sarnies. Also available are a children's baking set and apron with the same design.

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Available from: tinyurl.com/megahalo

This Arctic-camo vehicle (with bonus Ghost assault vehicle) is one of six new additions to MEGA Bloks' *Halo* series. This 222-piece build-yourself jobby clicks together like LEGO. It took our reviews editor three hours to complete, with many furious imprecations uttered – but then he thinks assembling IKEA furniture is on a par with waterboarding.

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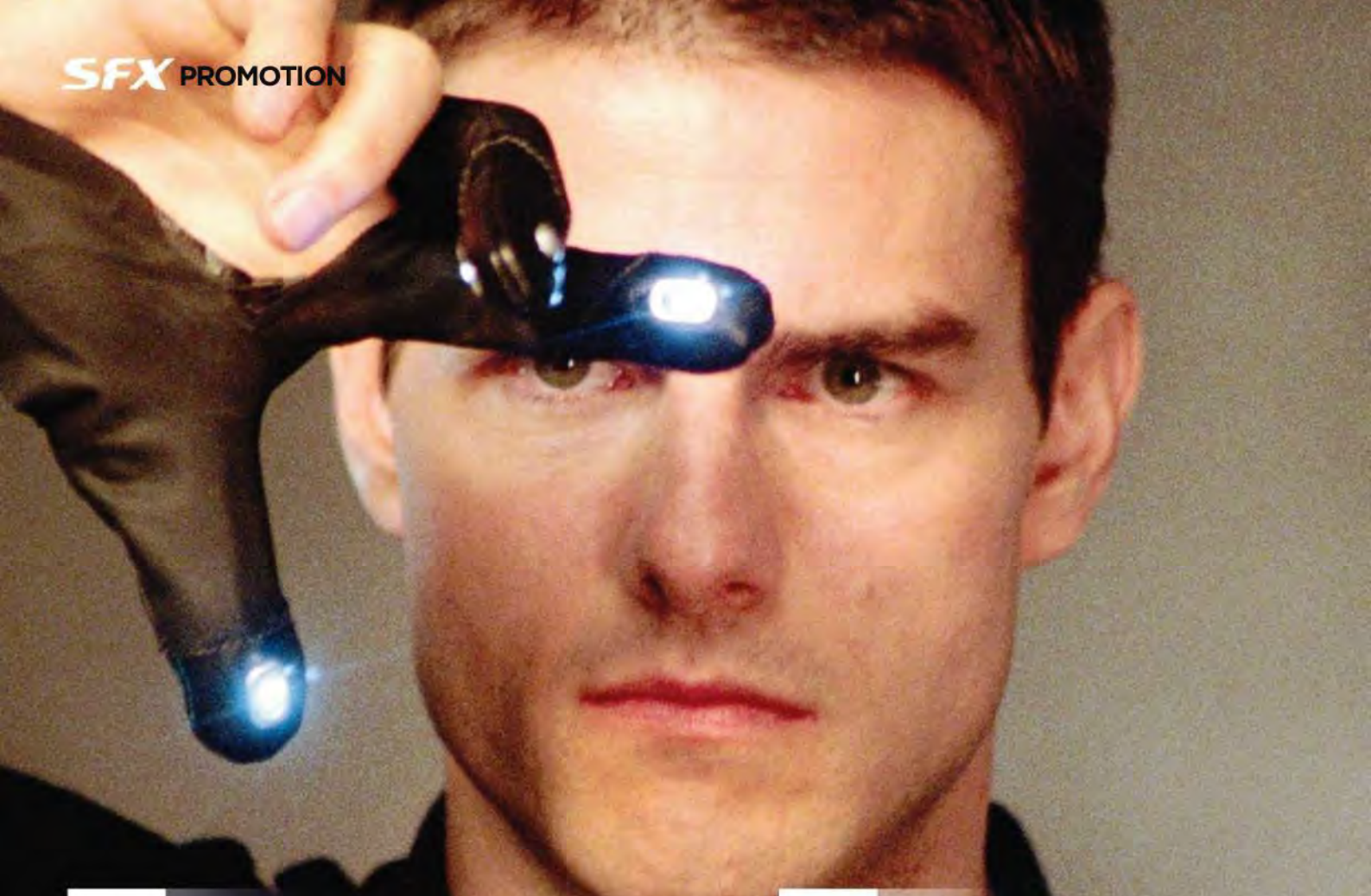

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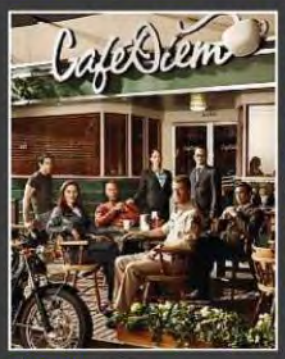
ANALYSIS AND RATINGS FOR NEW TV EPISODES

CONTENTS



EUREKA P144
4.04 The Story Of O2 ★★★★★
4.05 Crossing Over ★★★★★
4.06 Momstrosity ★★★★★
4.07 Stoned ★★★★★

FUTURAMA P145
6.06 Lethal Inspection ★★★★★
6.07 The Late Philip J Fry ★★★★★
6.08 That Darn Katz! ★★★★★
6.09 A Clockwork Origin ★★★★★
6.10 The Prisoner Of Benda ★★★★★
6.11 Lrrreconcilable Ndndifferences ★★★★★

THE GATES P145
SERIES PREMIERE!
1.01 Pilot ★★★★★
1.02 What Lies Beneath ★★★★★
1.03 Breach ★★★★★
1.04 The Monster Within ★★★★★

HAVEN P143
1.03 Harmony ★★★★★
1.04 Consumed ★★★★★
1.05 Ball And Chain ★★★★★
1.06 Fur ★★★★★

TRUE BLOOD P142
3.07 Hitting The Ground ★★★★★
3.08 Night On The Sun ★★★★★
3.09 Everything Is Broken ★★★★★
3.10 I Smell A Rat ★★★★★

WAREHOUSE 13 P143
2.05 13.1 ★★★★★
2.06 Around The Bend ★★★★★
2.07 For The Team ★★★★★

This issue: 25 reviews!

THE GATES

If you go down to the woods today...

TRUE BLOOD

AIRING IN THE USA NOW, ON HBO

Sookie's in need of a good lie down.

3.07
HITTING THE GROUND

Writer **Brian Buckner**

Director **John Dahl**

★★★★

THE ONE WHERE Sookie stakes Lorena and rescues a dying Bill. She lets him drink from her, but he gets carried away and nearly drains her dry.

VERDICT After dividing the cast for the first half of the season, it's great to see everyone back together again – even if Sookie does spend most of the reunion unconscious. Interesting that her blood, in large quantities, appears to protect Bill from the sunlight. Is that why Eric is so interested in her? Elsewhere, there's more fun with Russell. His murder of the Magister is hardly surprising, but for the first time he feels dangerous. The Bon Temps storylines are small-fry, but Hoyt's new girlfriend, Summer (played by stand-up Melissa Rauch), is amusingly awful – and cute in a weird, buttoned-up, psycho-housewife way. Not buying Jason's infatuation with horrible redneck Crystal though...

BEST BIT Lorena makes friends with the pointy end of a stake – and not a moment too soon. The character was interesting at first, but, much like Darla in *Angel*, her constant smarminess was seriously starting to grate. Death to smug vampires!

WTF? Where exactly does Sookie's mind go while her body is lying in the hospital bed. Heaven? With everything in soft focus it certainly looks like a clichéd depiction of the afterlife... But when has *True Blood* ever been that simple?

BEST LINE **Russell to Eric, after seeing his torture chamber:** "We must talk franchising later."

Talbot gets the point from Eric.

3.08
NIGHT ON THE SUN

Writer **Raelle Tucker**

Director **Lesli Linka Glatta**

★★★★

THE ONE WHERE Bill and Sookie split up, while Jesus and Lafayette decide to make a go of things. Eric gets closer to Talbot, and while Russell is away, brutally murders him. Debbie and a pack of Russell's werewolves attack Sookie, but Bill and Jessica come to her rescue.

VERDICT There's something almost Shakespearian about the way that Eric lurks in the background of Russell's vampire court, quietly manipulating everyone around him. It's obvious where all of this is heading (clue: massive bloodshed), but that just adds to the sense of impending doom – and there's still time for the wheels to come off of his plan. The rest of this episode is characterised by smaller, but rather lovely scenes. Bill and Jessica's reunion is sweet and funny, but bested by the blossoming romance between Jesus and Lafayette. Anyone else getting bored of men going gaga for Sookie though? Yeah, she's cute, but having Bill, Eric, Sam and now Alcide all mooning over her (er, not literally) is tedious.

BEST BIT The creepy moment where Eric shags and then stakes poor Talbot. He's had "goner" written all over him all season, but it's still sad to see the world's vainest vampire go out like that.

ANNOYING LITTLE RUNT Tommy Merlotte really is a dick. Here he tries to start a fight with Hoyt to prove something or other to Jessica. Hit him Hoyt, hit him!

BEST LINE **Eric:** "Forgive the interruption your majesty. There's a werebitch in your study."

3.09
EVERYTHING IS BROKEN

Writer **Alexander Woo**

Director **Scott Winant**

★★★★½

THE ONE WHERE Eric returns to Bon Temps, but is captured by a squad of Authority shock troops. He is interrogated about the Magister's death, and uses the opportunity to tell all about Russell's plans. He cuts a deal with Nan Flanagan and is set free – on the basis that he kills Russell. Bill, still suffering side effects from drinking Sookie's blood, enters the world we saw in "Hitting The Ground", and discovers the truth about Sookie's heritage. Jason gets further embroiled in Crystal's problems, but comes good when he rescues Tara from a resurrected Franklin. Russell, crazed with grief following Talbot's murder, makes a very public declaration of his intent to disrupt the Vampire Rights Amendment – by ripping out a news anchor's spine live on TV.

VERDICT There's a priceless scene early on in this episode, where Sookie discovers a dead body in her living room – and is more irritated than shocked. After reconciling with Bill last week, she finally seems to have grasped that her life is never going to be normal again. And thank goodness for that – the angst was wearying. Elsewhere, this cracker of an episode is chock full of brilliant moments: Hoyt admitting that he "fucking hates" Summer, Sam finally cracking and hospitalising Crystal's dad, and Nan Flanagan putting Eric in his place, calling him a "whiny little bitch". There's thrilling Big Picture stuff too, as we see the vampiric "Authority" for the first time, and Russell declaring war on them. Where the show goes from here is anyone's guess – but all out hostility between man and vampire-kind now seems inevitable. The only niggle this week is that the question of Sookie's ancestry is addressed, but not answered, again. Oh, just tell us already!

GOT WOOD Hooray for Jason despatching Franklin once and for all with the wooden bullets he had planned for Bill. James Frain was great in the role, and the character was often hilarious – but still, y'know, a rapist. The show would have been at risk of trivialising that if they'd kept bringing him back to show off his funny texting technique. Here's hoping this marks the start of Tara rebuilding her life after all the trauma she's endured these past two seasons.

WTF? Why is Jason so obsessed with Crystal? She's horrible! There had better be a magical explanation behind this...

BEST LINE **Russell:** "Make no mistake, mine is the true face of vampires! Why would we seek equal rights? You are not our equals. We will eat you, after we eat your children. Now time for the weather. Tiffany?"

Best bit...

00:55:22 Breaking news

A slow news day...
...until Russell shows up.
Now who says politics is boring?
Nan looks on in horror.

Sam's in a bit of a tight spot...

3.10
I SMELL A RAT

Writers **Elisabeth R Finch, Kate Barnow**

Director **Michael Lehmann**

★★★

THE ONE WHERE We learn the truth about Sookie's powers, and Sam's dark past. She's a fairy, and he has killed. Meanwhile, Russell goes to ground and Jason finally comes clean to Tara about having shot Eggs.

VERDICT A letdown after last week, but still good fun. The reveal of Sookie's fairy heritage isn't especially surprising – let's face it, she was always going to be that or an angel – but does provide solid justification for why vamps are so drawn to her; they love fairy blood and hunted the race almost to extinction. It's disappointing, though, to see Tara wading further into tragedy. She's been through so much horror the past couple of years that it's easy to forget how sharp and fun the character was in the beginning. Let's hope we see more of that Tara soon.

FLASHBACK Jewel thief Sam gets conned out of some loot by the girl he's been seeing, and beaten up by her real fella. Sam goes after the pair of them, but it all goes horribly wrong. She pulls a gun, and he ends up shooting and killing her, and then coldly executing the boyfriend. Blimey. Given how much Tommy is pushing his buttons right now, it'll be interesting to see if Bon Temps' most reasonable resident can keep a lid on his anger management issues.

PHWOAR! Things heat up between Eric and Sookie as he kisses her – then chains her up in his dungeon. It's never just dinner and a DVD with her, is it?

BEST LINE **Sookie to Bill:** "I'm a fairy? How fucking lame!"

Will Salmon

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WAREHOUSE 13

NOW AIRING ON THURSDAYS ON SYFY

Claudia and Fargo feel the Force.

2.05
13.1
Writer **Ian Stokes**
Director **Chris Fisher**
★★★

THE ONE WHERE When some guy from *Eureka* tries to install a new computer system, the Warehouse goes into lockdown...

VERDICT So, this was the big crossover event. *One* character – Fargo – turns up from *Eureka* and plays a role that any techno geek could have played (well, maybe not Moss from *The IT Crowd*, though that's something we'd like to see). That aside, this is a decent enough slice of *Warehouse 13* frivolity that explores some of the background of the titular facility. Claudia and Fargo make a charismatic pairing, Rene (*Deep Space Nine*) Auberjonois looks like he's having a whale of a time in the dual role of senile old duffer and a Rimmer-in-his-dreams hologram. Snappy dialogue abounds and Saul Rubinek gets to play a genuinely intelligent and cunning Artie. But the plot does fizzle out after an intriguing set up, and the resolution is pure technobabble poppycock.

HIGHLIGHT Fargo and Claudia's "lightsaber" battle with the drones is hilarious, and capped off with the *Eureka* lad's exclamation, "20 years of practising in front of the mirror for the best four seconds of my life!" Well, he doesn't get much bedroom action.

BAD ROBOT No, JJ Abrams hasn't taken over on the show, we're being literal – the CG drones are iffy at best, and rarely look like they're in the same shot as the live action.

BEST LINE **Claudia:** "He's not just some guy. He's the guy I think about when I impulsively kiss guys I just met."

Tia Carrere guest stars as an old flame.

2.06
AROUND THE BEND
Writer **Robert Goodman**
Director **Tawnia McKiernan**
★★★★

THE ONE WHERE Pete becomes increasingly paranoid after Mrs Frederic chooses him for a secret assignment.

VERDICT Blimey. Who'd have thought it? The irrepressibly silly *Warehouse 13* casting its most irrepressibly silly character, Pete, in the role of conflicted, paranoid, conspiracy victim, being put through the Philip K Dick ringer. Of course, the show can't sustain this, and blows the cool central concept with a daft, artifact-induced "it was all a dream" ending, but the ride along the way is genuinely powerful, and for a while keeps you guessing. In fact, the big "reveal" (in which we see Pete snogging nothing, while he thinks he's with an old flame) is a genuine shocker. But the writers clearly didn't know where to take it from there. Shame. Shame, too, that this new more subdued Pete (and Eddie McClintock really does shine here) is a one-week-only event. Still, when everyone's favourite glowerer Mark Sheppard's a guest star, you can't blame anyone for being paranoid.

Meanwhile, Claudia's having her own kind of paranoia in a very amusing subplot about the Regents' contingency plans for getting rid of her.

THE LIST Ways that the Regents could "deal with" the Claudia problem include, "Erase her memory", "Drop her in a non-English-speaking country," and (number 43) "disposing her body in a vat of acid".

BEST LINES **Artie:** "You cannot let him touch anything." **Myka:** "Artie, it's Pete, okay? It's a win when he doesn't lick anything."

Artie is feeling a bit long in the tooth.

2.07
FOR THE TEAM
Writer **Drew Z Greenberg**
Director **Tawnia McKiernan**
★★★½

THE ONE WHERE Claudia goes on her first field mission with Myka, investigating some exploding teenage wrestlers (if this were *Buffy*, that'd be a metaphor for something). Pete discovers that Artie's secretly in lust with the Bionic Woman. Oh, and HG Wells returns...

VERDICT Somehow, this episode overcomes a central plot of mindnumbing tedium. That's because, when it comes down to it, the whole wrestling gubbins is one massive McGuffin; a mere excuse to get HG Wells back in the mix. And, in a twist that'll doubtless twist again soon, she wants to be one of the good guys. You know what? It's actually fun watching her and Myka work together, so much so it'll be a pity when she's later revealed to have had some cunning evil plan all along.

The B-plot's also great fun, even if a stir-crazy Pete (grounded after the events of the previous ep) goes into irritating, shouty overdrive. Artie's hankering after sexy doctor Lindsay Wagner is really rather sweet. The episode also boasts some wonderfully witty dialogue and a couple of effective character-building moments.

DID YOU HEAR? Lindsay Wagner's Farnsworth's ringtone is a very tinny version of the classic "bionic" sound effect.

COMEDY HIGHLIGHT Artie as a giant walrus (that's how he looks through Timothy Leary's glasses).

BEST LINE **Pete:** "You, sir, have been growing back your appendix in an attempt to get Vanessa to visit the warehouse! That's so romantic." **Dave Golder**

HAVEN

DUE TO AIR ON UK SYFY LATER THIS YEAR

Hope that's not one of his shag faces.

1.03
HARMONY
Writer **Matt McGuinness**
Director **Rachel Talalay**
★★★

THE ONE WHERE A musical freak of the week makes the insane sane and vice versa.

VERDICT So now we know – Haven's townsfolk *know* they live in a weird place, but somehow whenever anyone refers to "the troubles" they make it sound like a euphemism for "women's problems". Anyway, it's a dull episode based on a stupid idea stretched out into an unconvincing whodunnit plot. Even the arc-plot about the mysterious woman in the photo is half-hearted.

BEST LINE **Audrey:** "This weird stuff kind of does turn me on." (This isn't HBO, dear!)

That's some nasal hair going on there.

1.05
BALL AND CHAIN
Writer **Nikki Toscano**
Director **Tim Southam**
★★★

THE ONE WHERE A strange, sexy woman makes young guys age super quick.

VERDICT The rapid ageing spreads from vegetable last week to young guys this week (and, it feels, the viewer too). Exactly why the stupidly convoluted plot makes no sense at all requires more space than is available here, but the episode also deserves a kicking for taking the show's best character, Duke, and making him really, really dull. So far, nothing about this show is clicking into place.

HUH? "Contrary to popular belief, I don't know where every woman in Haven lives."

The lobster's off.

1.04
CONSUMED
Writer **Ann Lewis Hamilton**
Director **Rachel Talalay**
★★★

THE ONE WHERE The freak of the week makes fresh food decompose rapidly.

VERDICT It's difficult to know what's more rancid about this episode: the decaying food or the script. Once again, the two leads fight valiantly to inject some life into the episode, but it's difficult to get excited about a plot based on rotten vegetables. An exploding udder could have been a gruesome highlight if the CG wasn't so bad.

BEST LINES **Nathan:** "Wanna be a local, helps to look like one." **Audrey:** "I thought I just had to squint a lot and leave out half my words."

Attack of the stuffed bear.

1.06
FUR
Writer **Jim Dunn**
Director **Keith Samples**
★★★★

THE ONE WHERE A taxidermist makes stuffed animals come alive, including her dead son.

VERDICT Invasion of the felt zombies – even *Warehouse 13* would have trouble making a plot like that sound feasible. *Haven* just ends up looking very, very silly and desperate for ideas. Still, two new characters have potential: Nathan's new-age girlfriend and an endearingly wacky medical examiner. But the arc plot is still going nowhere and feels tagged on like a dead weight.

BEST LINE **David:** "He likes all creatures great and small, he says. Usually with fries." **Dave Golder**

EUREKA

CURRENTLY AIRING ON SYFY

4.04
THE STORY OF O2

Writers **Jill Blotevogel, Eric Tuchman**

Director **Colin Ferguson**

★★★

THE ONE WHERE The annual design-a-rocket competition goes awry when an experimental terraforming compound is released into the atmosphere and starts making things explode.

VERDICT Is everybody in Eureka (supposedly a centre for geniuses) an idiot? The events of this episode are the result of experts behaving like spoiled children. Everybody's cheating, whether it's Allison trying to rig the rocket test for Kevin, or Larry leaving out the self-destruct module. The lead scientist talks like a surfer bum and Zane is allowed to fly around on a top secret hover bike as if it were a toy – General Mansfield is right, someone should be locked up.

There's a sweet subplot about Carter paying a surprise visit to Harvard to check on Zoe. Since the episode is directed by actor Colin Ferguson, you realise immediately why it needs to be a Carter-lite episode, although it is also nice to see Zoe back at last. Surely there's a Mrs Slocombe-style "my pussy's got all wet" gag waiting to be made when her bedraggled cat is trapped in the dorm room shower, though...

Carter's absence from the main set means the science-problem-of-the-week isn't solved by his natural common sense, but in all other ways this is predictable fare.

WHAT'S CHANGED? Zoe's hairstyle. Plus, damage sustained right at the start of this season means that Andy had to be "re-skinned" (introducing Kavan Smith from *Stargate: Atlantis* as the new android), which I'm not overly happy about because I thought the original, slightly plump, Andy was great fun.

LMAO The "VIP seating" for the general at the Rocket Day event is just a single roped-off chair on the grass, in the same place as everyone else.

BABY BLUES? Where the hell is Allison's baby? The girl she spent all last season pregnant with, and whose delivery was a climactic moment in season three's "You Don't Know Jack"? It's like she doesn't exist.

REAL SCIENCE As discussed in the Global Dynamics lab, oxygen genuinely accounts for 21% of air. Exposure to too much oxygen (anything over about 50%, unless you've had special diver's training) can cause "oxygen toxicity", the correct name for the disorientation and sight problems experienced by the Eureka inhabitants. Jules Verne was interested in the concept, and included an episode of oxygen intoxication in *From The Earth To The Moon*.

BEST LINE **Andy:** "Oh. I seem to be conflagrating. How unusual."

Best bit...

00:38:22 Burning the oxygen

Hydrogen balloons are launched.

Allison, Kevin and Grant look on.

Boom! The hydrogen explodes.

H and O together make water.

...and tied up with piano wire.

4.05
CROSSING OVER

Writer **Paula Yoo**

Director **Michael Robison**

★★★½

THE ONE WHERE The hip young Claudia Donovan from *Warehouse 13* visits Eureka (see p43), and there's chemistry with Fargo. Meanwhile, Grant seems to be breaking apart at the quantum level, causing items from 1947 to crash through time into the present day.

VERDICT Although the time travel MacGuffin creates plenty of peril – the sudden appearance of a minefield, for instance, or the bullet that materialises *inside* Jo ("You can't even get *shot* in the usual way around here," whines Carter) – this is a romantic episode. The presence of Claudia from *Warehouse 13 is* patently a TV marketing gimmick: there's no real reason why any of the regular cast couldn't do what she does in her scenes. But she provides a romantic opportunity for Fargo, who gets a rare snog. Meanwhile, Carter is fixated on his only kiss with Allison and getting more jealous of Grant all the time, and Henry is falling for Grace, whom he married in the other timeline. There are some moments of fun and something for *Warehouse 13* fans to remember fondly, but this is essentially an episode for the 'shippers.

LMAO James Callis rocking out to "Car Wash" – "1970s music is *off the hook*, know what I'm saying!" he bleats.

REAL SCIENCE One of the items to fall through time is a nuclear ICBM. America had MX-774 missile technology as early as 1946.

BEST LINES **Claudia:** "This was not how I imagined things going."
Fargo: "No. I imagined a swanky hotel at Comic-Con."

Number Five is alive!

4.06
MOMSTROSITY

Writers **Terri Hughes Burton, Ron Milbauer**

Director **Michael Rohl**

★★★½

THE ONE WHERE Carter and Grant are competing for Allison's affections, which freaks out her son Kevin when they all go camping. Meanwhile, the computers in town seem to be developing emotions. Could it have something to do with the Emo robot Kevin is looking after as part of a project?

VERDICT What a deliciously stupid episode title. Dangerous mothers? There's a lot here influenced by the females of James Cameron movies; look out for *Aliens* and *Terminator* quotes.

The frothy, "flirty" nature of the story (SARAH loves Andy, Andy loves Lupo, everybody loves Allison and so on) is fortunately offset by some moments of genuine jeopardy. The emotional computers try to kill more than one person, which gives it a hard edge... although what that says about emotions isn't too cheery. Somebody at Syfy feeling a bit cynical?

Henry coming clean to Grace about being from a different timeline is a turning point. If time travel is the big no-no he's been saying it is, he took a big risk grassing up the other four time travellers to her.

SCI-FI REFERENCES Fargo shouts, "Come with me if you want to live!" when he drives up; Lupo calls the little robot a "toaster"; Emo bleeps and bloops like R2-D2; the AI camping equipment is codenamed BUFFY and Allison shouts, "Get away from him you bitch!" when Tiny grabs hold of her son.

BEST LINE **Carter:** "You! The big Titan robot! With the *unnecessarily* creepy design!"

Whatever you do, don't blink...

4.07
STONED

Writer **Eric Wallace**

Director **Joe Morton**

★★★

THE ONE WHERE Zoe comes to Eureka and apparently has a new beau in her life – of course, it's Zane, causing Jo grief. Meanwhile people turn to stone after a hunky palaeontologist discovers ancient ruins on the site of Jo's new house.

VERDICT More of the cast get to test their directing skills – this time it's Joe "Henry" Morton. It's competently put together, but very much a standard *Eureka* episode.

Is there a nod to *Doctor Who*'s Weeping Angels? Zane's offer to get Fargo the TARDIS blueprints off the Pentagon server hints that somebody in the Syfy offices was thinking that way. In any case, the FlashCrete-infected people are creepy – although nothing like "Blink". In fact, this is mostly another soap opera story – the highlights being Carter *finally* snogging Allison after all these years (a satisfying, if predictable, romantic grab just as the audience is shrieking "kiss her you fool!"), and Grant being rumbled by a familiar face...

CHARACTER Blimey, it's the return of the devious Beverly from the very first season! Bet you forgot about her.

WTF? In an effort to surprise Grace, Henry sings an impromptu disco number in the GD reception area, with Fargo on the decks. Please don't ever do that again.

REFERENCE The archaeologist is accused of "trying to pull a Piltdown" – a famous archaeological hoax from Sussex that went unexposed for 40 years.

BEST LINE **Lupo:** "Your house is getting more action than either of us!" **Dave Bradley**

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SERIES PREMIERE!

THE GATES

NOW AIRING ON ABC

Just your average gated community. Only better looking.

Creators **Grant Scharbo, Richard Hatem**

CAST

Rhona Mitra	**Claire Radcliff**
Luke Mably	**Dylan Radcliff**
Frank Grillo	**Nick Monohan**
Marisol Nichols	**Sarah Monohan**
Travis Caldwell	**Charlie Monohan**
Skyler Samuels	**Andie Bates**
Colton Haynes	**Brett Crezski**

Normally, the problem with season premieres is that nothing much happen for the first few episodes. Not with *The Gates*. Instead, the problem here is that too much happens. The series is based in an American gated community called The Gates, where Sunnydale meets *The OC*, with a little *Desperate Housewives* thrown in for extra annoyance.

"Pilot" (1.01) ★★★★★ introduces us to two teenage werewolves, a married vampire couple and two opposing witches. This is a lot to take in during a first helping of any show. If the writers had brought the characters in more gradually, not only would the first episode feel less frantic, but it would have left **"What Lies Beneath" (1.02)** ★★★★★ with more of a story. Instead, the creators use a weak "who shot the sheriff?" plot, so that every character can get their proper introduction out of the way. There's also a boring and unnecessary love triangle set up between Andie Bates (Samuels), Brett Crezski (Haynes) and Charlie Monohan (Caldwell).

"Breach" (1.03) ★★★★★ has a more interesting storyline, but is once again ruined by the fact that there's too much packed in. There's a lockdown in The Gates because of the main police computer being hacked, so the police are on the hunt for the culprit. At the same time, both Claire Radcliff – the main vampire in the show – and the werewolves are off breaking the rules. On top of all of that, there's a B-plot (C-plot?) involving witches, which seems to make no sense whatsoever.

"The Monster Within" (1.04) ★★★★★ is better balanced and slightly less confusing, but sadly it focuses a lot on the relationship between Andie and Charlie. Andie is a succubus, but doesn't know it yet. This makes her character a bit pathetic, feathery and frankly irritating to watch. The other two focal points are the misbehaving werewolves and a "Dad and Daughter Dance" event, which is a decent enough light-hearted sub-plot, adding a little humour to the show (and when I say "little" I really do mean "little"). The episode ends with Dylan Radcliff (Mably) – one of the show's more interesting characters – revealing his vampiric self to Nick Monohan (Grillo), the new police chief. This is the first time you'll feel like you have to keep watching.

Rachel Stanikk

Say "Aaaaaaarghhh!"

The Gates: not *Friends*.

FUTURAMA

UK AIRDATE YET TO BE ANNOUNCED

Robot weening in action – sweet.

6.06

LETHAL INSPECTION

Writer **Eric Horsted**

Director **Ray Claffey**

★★★½

THE ONE WHERE Hermes joins Bender on a mission to Mexico to find the inspector who passed him without a backup unit.

VERDICT The first episode this season to go for the heartstrings, and the first with a true shot at greatness. It has an unexpectedly brilliant odd couple, a return to the Central Bureaucracy and some wildly irreverent action. Unfortunately, the episode falls short as it's seriously lacking in laughs.

BEST LINE **Bender:** "He did it... and he's not looking back at that cool explosion. He's a hero!"

Zoidberg does Superdad, bless him.

6.09

A CLOCKWORK ORIGIN

Writer **Dan Vebber**

Director **Dwayne Carey-Hill**

★★★★

THE ONE WHERE The crew get stranded on a rapidly evolving robo-world.

VERDICT Who said *Futurama* doesn't tackle big issues? This week it's an intelligent take on the debate between evolution and creationism... in an episode featuring a robot T-rex fighting a robot triceratops. We love Zoidberg, but the third odd couple B-plot in almost as many weeks falls flat because of our irrational hatred for Cubert – even if he does get the best line.

BEST LINE **Cubert:** "Woah, you're like some kind of dumpster Jedi."

A *very* nice place to visit.

6.07

THE LATE PHILIP J FRY

Writer **Lewis Morton**

Director **Peter Avanzino**

★★★★

THE ONE WHERE Bender, Fry and the Professor get stuck on a time machine that can only travel forwards.

VERDICT *Futurama* finally makes good on the Fry/Leela relationship and nails the time-travel plot. It falls back on the amusing animals gag one too many times, but the rest is comedy gold with a series of genius pop-culture references (including glimpses of past episodes), and a gorgeous, Douglas Adams-esque end of the world sequence.

BEST LINE **The Professor:** "Just slow it down, I'll shoot Hitler out the window..."

En garde, metal fiend!

6.10

THE PRISONER OF BENDA

Writer **Ken Keeler**

Director **Stephen Sandoval**

★★★★

THE ONE WHERE The Professor's mind-swapping device causes havoc.

VERDICT The body-swap episode to end all body-swap episodes with the crew and a few outsiders getting in on the shenanigans. The Leela/Fry standoff is tiresome, while Bender and the Professor have the most developed stories and Scruffy the janitor has the standout scene.

BEST LINE **Scruffy:** "It's wrong Washbucket. Oh, it would be sweet for a while, but in the back of our minds we'd know that I'm a man, and you're janitorial equipment."

Nibbler and pipe and pondering.

6.08

THAT DARN KATZ!

Writer **Josh Weinstein**

Director **Frank Marino**

★★★½

THE ONE WHERE The Planet Express crew are brainwashed by alien cats.

VERDICT Nibbler is a character best served in small doses, but he's due a story. Fortunately, this tale of extraterrestrial cats out to steal the Earth's magnetic energy has just the right amount of barmy to suit the super-cute, dark-matter-pooping undercover agent. Amy also gets plenty to do in an episode even dog lovers will enjoy.

BEST LINE **Professor Fisherprice Shpeekenshpell:** "The horse says: 'doctorate denied'."

Time to play "spot the in-jokes"...

6.11

LRRRECONCILABLE NDNDIFFERENCES

Writer **Patrick M Verrone**

Director **Crystal Chesney-Thompson**

★★★★½

THE ONE WHERE Lrrr, ruler of Omicron Persei 8, conquers Earth to win back his wife.

VERDICT For our money, this is the funniest episode of the season, featuring *The Scary Door*, Fry's unspeakably bad comic *Delivery Boy Man* and a fantastically well observed Comic-Con spoof – the number of sight gags making it a perfect freeze frame sequence. The plot isn't perfect and the ending is a little bland, but the Omicronians are a real treat.

BEST LINE **Nd-Nd:** "I send you out to conquer a planet and all you bring me back is JJ Abrams' face." **Jordan Farley**

FEAR ON FRIDAY

RUSSELL LEWIN PRODUCTION EDITOR

It's not uncommon that I find myself walking home late on a Friday night after imbibing too many pints of best bitter. As I amble through suburbia I gaze up at bedroom windows – come on, who doesn't? – and I often observe rooms that are bathed in the glow of the sensual rays of a warm television set. The curtains may be fully closed or open just a crack, but I can sense the humming excitement in that room. Because I know what they're watching: they're watching *Doctor Blood's Coffin* (1961).

Of course they're not. It hasn't been on any TV channel in years and it's not even available on region two DVD. So why do I think that? It's not just because I'm drunk. It's because this evocative *mise en scene* unfailingly reminds me of the first horror film I properly watched, back in the mid '80s on my new portable TV in my bedroom with the lights out on Friday night. What a delicious thrill it was – and never mind that *Doctor Blood's Coffin*, a reworking of *Frankenstein* set in Cornwall, isn't a particularly great movie. The frisson that I felt thanks to being able to watch late-night TV on *my own television set* was considerable. Thanks to Tyne Tees, I had *Fear On Friday*.

Fear On Friday was an umbrella title for horror films that went out in the north-east around 10.30pm on the best night of the week. The most common films shown were British horror films from the 1970s, cementing my love of my birth decade and my country. Soon after my appointment with Dr Blood, there were ones with Vincent Price in *Madhouse*, Holmes and Watson in *A Study In Terror* and Susan George in *Fright*. I was hooked.

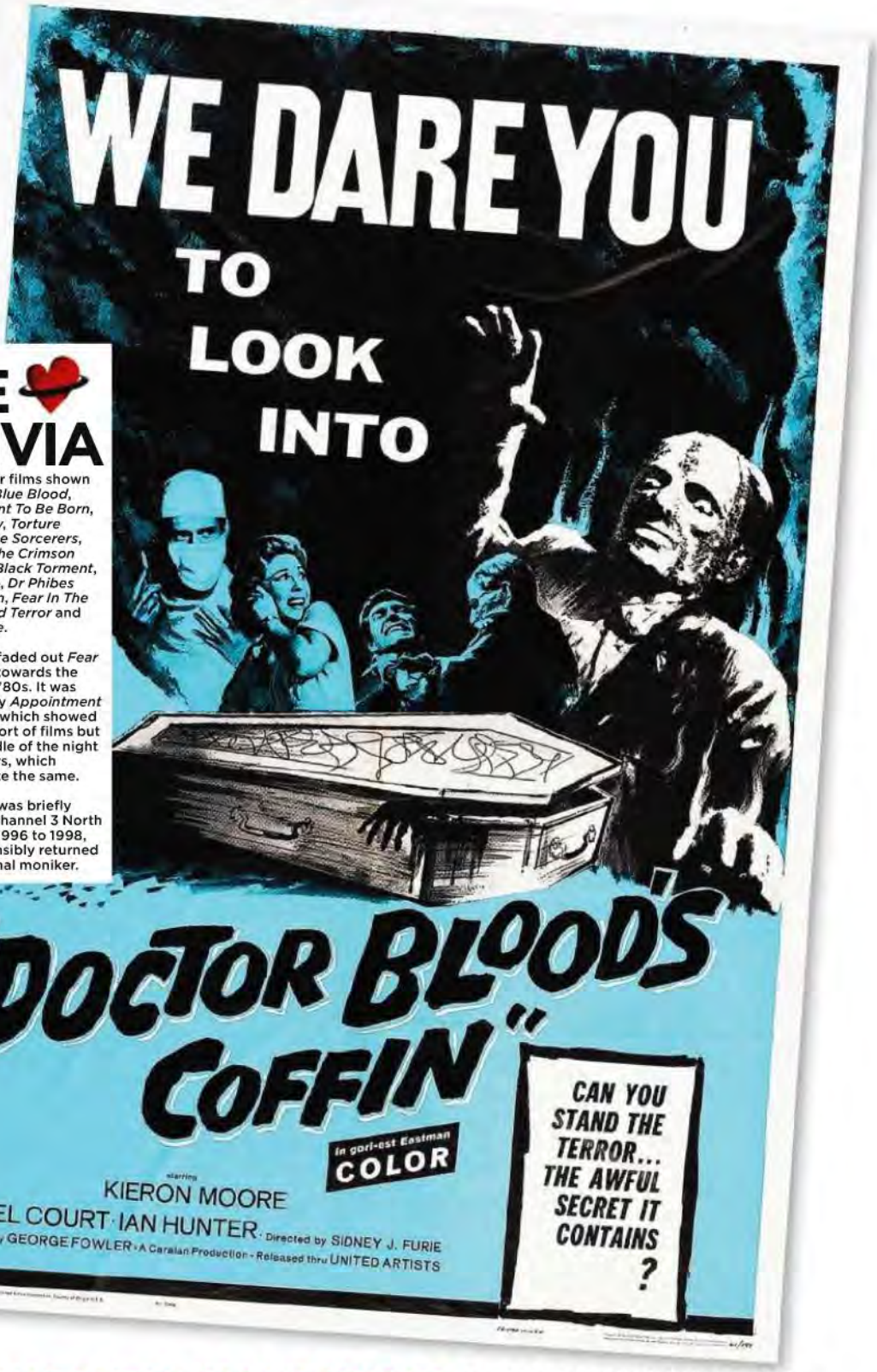
I'll always remember *Fear On Friday* fondly. Hey, it introduced me to British horror films while allowing me to stay up late. And it led me to write this, which will hopefully be an excellent defence the next time the police collar me for staring up at bedrooms on a Friday night. SFX

WE ♥ TRIVIA

» Some other films shown included: *Blue Blood*, *I Don't Want To Be Born*, *The Legacy*, *Torture Garden*, *The Sorcerers*, *Curse Of The Crimson Altar*, *The Black Torment*, *Death Ship*, *Dr Phibes Rises Again*, *Fear In The Night*, *Blind Terror* and *The Vulture*.

» Tyne Tees faded out *Fear On Friday* towards the end of the '80s. It was replaced by *Appointment With Fear*, which showed the same sort of films but in the middle of the night on Mondays, which wasn't quite the same.

» Tyne Tees was briefly renamed Channel 3 North East from 1996 to 1998, when it sensibly returned to its original moniker.



SEE YOU NEXT MONTH! WEDNESDAY 20 OCTOBER DETAILS ON PAGE 27

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